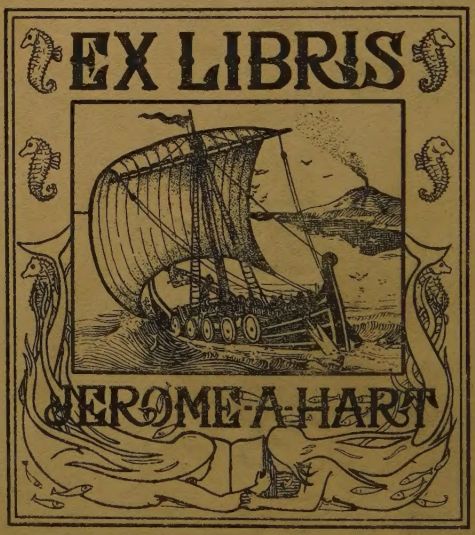
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# THE SOCIAL SIDE OF THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY

BY

E. BELFORT BAX

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION," "THE RELIGION OF SOCIALISM," "THE ETHICS OF SOCIALISM," "HANDBOOK OF THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY," ETC., ETC.

*PART I: GERMAN SOCIETY AT THE CLOSE OF THE MIDDLE AGES*
*PART II: THE PEASANTS WAR IN GERMANY: 1525-1526*
*PART III: RISE AND FALL OF THE ANABAPTISTS*

LONDON
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & Co., LIM
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1903

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# PREFACE

THE present volume, the third of the series, concludes our studies of the social side of the Reformation in Germany. Anabaptism was essentially a German product and did not take root in the Latin countries. But the importance of this great movement in all lands possessing a strong Teutonic element, not even excluding England, has been little realised by the average historian. The latter has been inclined for the most part to dismiss this tremendous upheaval of the disinherited classes at the close of the Middle Ages with a few paragraphs of abuse and often misrepresentation. We may regard Anabaptism as the culminating effort of mediæval Christian Communism, which saw in the communisation of worldly goods (understanding by this the economic products designed for consumption) the farthest goal of man's social existence. The modern notion of the socialisation of the means of production was not as yet thought of, as it was not even conceivably possible at the then stage of economic evolution.

Among the various authorities on the subject of the Anabaptist movement which have been consulted in the preparation of the present volume may be especially mentioned:

(1) Of first-hand sources the "*Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertaüfer in Oestreich-Ungarn,*" edited by Dr. J. Beck; the "*Neue Zeitung von den Wiedertaüferischen Sect,*" 1528; various original documents published as an appendix in Cornelius's work, in Ludwig Keller's history, in Bouterwek's "*Zur Litteratur und Geschichte der Wiedertaüfer*" etc.; the "*Geschichtsquellen des Bisthums Münster,*" issued by the "*Verein für Vaterländische Geschichte und Altertumskunde,*" especially the volume containing Gresbeck's account of the Münster Kingdom of God and the confessions of the Münster Anabaptists obtained under torture, etc., also the volumes of Kerssenbroick's

"*Anabaptistici Furoris Monasterium Inclitam Westphaliæ Metropolim Evertentis Historica Narratio,*" published in the same series; in addition, of course, to such publications of the Anabaptists themselves as are still obtainable.

(2) Among modern works first and foremost come the two volumes (all that was completed at the time of his death) of Cornelius's "*Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs,*" a mine of accurate scholarship and careful historical criticism. Keller's "*Geschichte der Wiedertaüfer*" is also a valuable compendium of original research, and his "*Ein Apostel der Wiedertaüfer,*" (a life of Hans Denk) is noteworthy as a sketch of Anabaptist life and manners. Loserth's works on the subject, especially his "*Wiedertaüfer in Mähren*" and his "*Balthasar Hubmayer,*" are of considerable value to the historian. Kautsky's account of the Anabaptists contained in the first volume of the "*Geschichte des Socialismus*" may be mentioned as a striking historical appreciation. As regards older works dealing at second-hand with the history of the Anabaptists, one of the most widely read in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when it passed through several editions, was F. Ca ou's "*Histoire des Anabaptistes,*" published in Paris. A contemporary German medley on the subject was compiled by various hands and published at Cöthen, in Anhalt. The English "*Fanatick History*" by Blome, issued in the reign of Charles II., is a polemical essay directed against contemporary Quakers and dissenters generally, and holding up the Münster Kingdom of God as a terrifying example, a policy more than once adopted by theological disputants at that time.

The recent English literature on the Anabaptists is scanty, the most important contributions being perhaps the articles from the pen of Mr. Richard Heath, scattered through the numbers of the "Contemporary Review" between 1890 and 1900.

In the following chapters the writer believes that the subject will be found to be presented in a fairly complete outline.

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# RISE AND FALL OF THE ANABAPTISTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### BEGINNINGS OF ANABAPTISM.

THE religio-political mysticism, sporadic among the smaller handicraftsmen of the towns and the peasantry throughout the whole of the Middle Ages, acquired an extraordinary impulse at their close, that is, during the period known as the Reformation. Political movements with a religious coloring, or religious movements with a political coloring, according to circumstances, may be said to have become chronic, through central and western Europe, from the end of the 15th century onwards.

In two former volumes I have traced the history of these movements in Germany, which culminated in the great Peasants War of 1525. This insurrection, extinguished though it was as such for the time being, continued to live on in the minds of the people, and, in a manner,

rose again from its ashes in the great Anabaptist revolt of a few years later.

Some of the leaders of the peasant rising of 1525 have been incorrectly described as Anabaptists, on account of the similarity of their views and aims with those of the later movement. Notably is this the case with Thomas Münzer, the leading spirit of the revolt in Thuringia; the latter, however, was by no means at one with the initiators of the Anabaptist movement then just beginning in Switzerland. To its special sign, re-baptism, Münzer attached no importance whatever. The so-called Zwickau prophets, Nicholas Storch and his colleagues, seem, in their general attitude, to have approached very closely to the principles of the Anabaptist sectaries. But, even here, it is incorrect to regard them, as has often been done, as directly connected with the latter; still more, as themselves the germ of the Anabaptist party of the following years.

As to the actual origins of Anabaptism, properly so called, our information is somewhat scant, and is vitiated by the fact that much of it comes from bitterly hostile sources. "Anno 1524 and 1525 A.C. is God's word and the

Gospel of Jesus Christ come into all Germany, after the Peasants War."[1] Such is the exordium of an Anabaptist account of the origin of the sect. "As may be found in the old chronicles and histories, Germany or Deutschland was so wild, rude and untilled, and its people so unlearned, with so rude ways and customs as scarce another place or province in the world. Moreover, no man hath anywhere read that any apostle or disciple of Christ did ever come to this country, notwithstanding that elsewhere they journeyed over sea and land to far-off countries, to the end that they might preach God's word. Perhaps hath even this German land been chosen by God to discover and to set forth His word in this the last age of this passing world." The writer then proceeds, in a few words, to sketch the history of the Reformation, observing that Luther had known how to pull down an old house, but not to build up a new one. With the Reformers, he says, it is as though they were mending an old pot in which the hole only grows larger: "They have smitten the vessel out of the hand of the Pope, but left

[1] *Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäufer in Oestreich Ungarn. Herausgegeben von J. von Beck*, II, pp. 11, 12.

the fragments therein; for a new birth of Life hath one never seen with them." After a passing allusion to Münzer and others, he proceeds: "God hath called to this wonderful work men in Switzerland; amongst them have been Balthazar Hubmeyer, Konrad Grebel, Felix Manz and Georg von Chur." "These men," he says, "have recognized that one must first of all learn the Divine message, the love of an active faith, and only after having done so, should he receive Christian baptism. But since, at that time, there was no servant ordained to such work, Georg of the house of Jacob called Blaurock rose up and prayed this Konrad Grebel in the name of God, that he should baptise him. After that was done, the others there present did demand the same from Georg, and began to hold and to teach the faith. Therewith hath the separation from the world originated and hath grown up."

This, it should be said, happened in an obscure gathering of enthusiasts at Zürich in the year 1525, and from this occasion amidst this small circle we may fairly place the origin of the Anabaptist sect or party proper. Anabaptism was emphatically in the air; in other words,

the spirit and general tendencies of what subsequently consolidated itself as the Anabaptist movement were dominant amongst certain orders of the population in widely distant centres. But the sect actually took its rise from the above indicated small beginnings.

Zwingli had, through the manner in which he had conducted the Swiss reformation, given an impulse to radical tendencies, especially in Zürich, the centre of his activity; tendencies which he found it difficult later on to stem, when he saw he was beginning to lose control of them. Appeals to the command of God, as taking precedence of human authority, passionate invocations of the inner light, were the order of the day. Numbers came from other parts of Switzerland, as well as from the neighbouring German territories, to join in the controversial life of what might now be regarded as the metropolis of the Reformation in this part of the world. From Basel especially came several of those who were later the apostles of the Anabaptist movement. Wilhelm Reublin from Würtemberg, who as chief preacher at St. Albans, in Basel, had ostentatiously broken rules as to fasting, and who was exiled from

the city as soon as the Reformation began to stir there, came to Zürich, where he soon obtained a living in the neighbourhood of the town, and not long after, amid the applause of the inhabitants, celebrated the first priestly wedding within the Swiss borders. Simon Stumpf, another Basel priest, finding Basel too hot for him, fled to Zürich, where, like his colleague, he obtained a living in a village near. Here he thundered against authority in Church and State and was eloquent on the ungodliness of rent-dues and tithes. Ludwig Hätzer or Hetzer, a learned young priest, hailing from Thurgau, was also drawn to the great centre of agitation, where he made a name through a tract he issued against images in churches. Appointed as secretary to the great debate on current theological questions held by the City Council in October 1523, he was the official editor of the minutes afterwards published. Hans Brödli, yet another preacher, came from Graubünden and settled at Zollikon, near Zürich, where he also instructed the peasantry in the principles of the new gospel, not forgetting also to denounce tithes and dues as contrary to the Pauline precept that all men should earn their bread

by the work of their hands. In close connection with these men by means of correspondence were others holding similar views in the north of Switzerland and across the German border. Amongst them may be noted Balthazar Hubmeyer, the reforming pastor of Waldshut, an account of whose activity there will be found in our former volume. (See "*Peasants War*" pp. 91—94.) There was also the Reader of the bare-footed friars at Schaffhausen, Dr. Sebastian Hochmeister. They were both enthusiastic adherents of the new order of things ecclesiastical that was being inaugurated at Zürich.

For at first the Anabaptist movement at Zürich was an extreme wing of the reforming movement of Zwingli. But, as is usual in such cases, no sooner had the latter movement succeeded in establishing itself than a rupture took place, and Zwingli found himself strong enough to cut off his inconvenient radical tail. Early in the year 1522 we hear of the formation of a school of heretics in the town, under the leadership of the bookseller Andreas auf der Stilze, who also hailed from Basel, where, it is probable, he had already been associated in friendly intercourse with Grebel, Stumpf, Reublin, Hetzer

and others. But at first this association, advanced as were its views, continued in the most friendly relation with Zwingli himself, and with the reformed party in Zürich generally.

It was in the late autumn of this year, 1522, that the other reforming spirits from Basel came to Zürich. From this time forward, the little society embodying the new tendencies acquired fresh life and importance. Proselytes joined it every day. The tendencies, embodied in the circle, began to acquire consistency and gradually took on the character of a distinct sect. From among the newcomers two men now obtained a special influence among the "Brethren," or the "Spirituals" as they were termed. These were the above mentioned Konrad Grebel, himself a young man sprung from a well-to-do family of Zürich burghers, who had studied in Paris and Vienna, and Felix Manz, also a Zürich burgher, and a friend of Grebel. In the house of Manz's mother meetings of the sectaries were held. Like Grebel, Manz was a scholar and full of youthful enthusiasm.

Zwingli had, by this time, carried out the new principles of the Reformation much more

logically than Luther and embodied them in a distinct confession of faith. Not standing on the same theological ground as Luther, he had less hesitation and was prepared to carry on the work of destruction beyond the point at which Luther held his hand. The result was that in Zürich every semblance of Catholic ceremony was entirely swept away. Meanwhile the effect of the continuous theological wrangling of the Reformers amongst themselves, who showed themselves only thoroughly united in their attack on Catholicism and on certain catholic usages, was to detach large numbers of the non-learned classes from the positive dogmatic system that the learned were endeavouring to set up in the place of the old Catholic theology. The biblical text itself, now everywhere read and re-read in the German language, was pondered and discussed in the house of the handicraftsman and in the hut of the peasant with as much confidence of interpretation as in the study of the professional theologian. But there were also not a few of the latter order, as we have seen, who were becoming disgusted with the trend of the official Reformation and its leading representatives. The Bible thus

afforded a *point d'appui* for the mystical tendencies now becoming universally prominent, a *point d'appui* lacking to the earlier movements of the same kind that were so constantly arising during the Middle Ages proper. Seen in the dim religious light of a continuous reading of the Bible and of very little else, the world began to appear in a new aspect to the simple soul who practised it. All things seemed filled with the immediate presence of Deity. He who felt a call pictured himself as playing the part of the Hebrew prophet. He gathered together a small congregation of followers who felt themselves as the children of God in the midst of a heathen world. Did not the fall of the old Church mean that the day was at hand when the elect should govern the world? It was not so much positive doctrines as an attitude of mind that was the ruling spirit in Anabaptism and like movements. Similarly, it was undoubtedly such a sensitive impressionism rather than any positive dogma that dominated the first generation of the Christian Church itself. How this acted in the case of the earlier Anabaptists we shall presently see.

The new sect that took its rise in Zürich

in 1522 was one of a number of similar sects springing up at various points throughout central Europe about the same time. This Zürich sect, however, historical fate had ordained should be the germ of the great Anabaptist movement, absorbing all other like sects and tendencies into itself. It must not be forgotten that it was, in its earlier stages, emphatically a religious and non-political organization. This was the point which sharply distinguished Konrad Grebel and his friends from others whose tendencies were similar, notably from Thomas Münzer. The little Zürich society would have nothing to do with carnal weapons. They would fight only with the sword of the spirit. In a letter under date September 5th, 1524, written by Konrad Grebel and his friends to Münzer, they say: "The Gospel and its followers shall not be guarded by the sword, neither shall they so guard themselves, as, by what we hear from the Brethren, ye assume and pretend to be right. Truly believing Christians are sheep in the midst of wolves, sheep ready for the slaughter; they must be baptized in fear and in need, in tribulation and death, that they may be tried to the last, and enter the fatherland of eternal

peace not with carnal, but with spiritual, weapons. They use neither the sword of the world nor war, for to kill is forbidden," etc.

During the year 1523 the new sect grew rapidly in Switzerland. The idea also made great headway that the aim of the Church reformation was the re-establishment of primitive Christian condition, not merely in matters of theology, but of social practice. But for many months there was no open schism between the Brethren and the reforming party of Zwingli. They made it their task to endeavour to urge Zwingli forward in the direction of religious revolution and of such social changes as seemed to them demanded by Holy Writ. Zwingli on his side confined himself to endeavouring to check the more extreme tendencies by gentle remonstrances. Yet the differences between the official reformation of Zwingli and that of the Brethren became more and more apparent every day, accompanied by an increasing bitterness on both sides. The definite split did not occur before the end of June. The Brethren became increasingly insistent on the immediate abolition of tithes and other ecclesiastical dues. Zwingli himself had previously spoken in favour

of this reform, which was, however, strongly opposed by an influential section of the burghers, who also carried with them a majority of the City Council. Accordingly, on June 22nd, the Council passed a resolution condemning emphatically the idea of attacking the existing sources of Church revenue. This was for Zwingli a parting of the ways. He had to make up his mind either to throw in his lot completely with the Brethren, whose revolutionary tendencies he now dreaded—a course that would have damned his influence with the wealthy Zürich burghers—or to throw over the Brethren with their subversive doctrines and attach himself definitely to the moderate party that found its expression in the majority of the Town Council. He did not long hesitate. On June 25th, he delivered a sermon in favour of the Council, and thus definitely ranged himself on the side of the moderates. Henceforward he became the acknowledged head of the official reformation in Switzerland.

The "Spirituals," on their side, grew more decided in their tendencies. It was now that the question of infant baptism first came forward as a prominent feature in the agitation of the

Brethren. But the rejection of infant baptism, strongly as it was insisted upon, was after all only a sign of vast divergencies otherwise from the Zwinglian Reformation. The Brethren, as representing the men of low estate, felt that they had not overthrown the Roman Church organization to hand themselves over, body and soul, to the secular authorities of the city, the "Ehrbarkeit" and wealthy guildmasters of Zürich. The theory that the Bible, interpreted by the inward light, was the only rule of faith, before which all human authority and institutions must bend, was now proclaimed with greater emphasis then ever. The result was as might have been expected. The truth of the saying that "you may prove anything out of the Bible" is signally illustrated by the subsequent history of the movement. The most absolute non-resistance doctrine, the most fiery invocations of the sword to destroy the unbelieving occupant of place and power, the mortification of the flesh of the anchorite, and the unbridled lasciviousness of the libertine, alike found their place in the ranks of the Anabaptists and of the later sects of the 16th and 17th centuries that sprang from the Anabaptist root.

After Zwingli's sermon the hostility between the two parties was declared. The decisive crisis, however, was brought about by the debate in the City Council on October 26th, 1523. There had already been a similar debate on the question of the Church reformation in the previous January. On this occasion the reformed Evangelical party had presented a solid front in their demands. Now it was otherwise, the only point upon which unanimity prevailed being the abolition of the Romish *cultus*, of the Mass, images etc; the question as to what should take the place of these things led to violent altercations. Grebel denounced various matters connected with the Sacrament—the mixing of the wine with water, the use of unleavened bread, its being received by the laity from the hands of the priests, etc. Zwingli would have none of these criticisms. The malcontents were inveighed against as a source of discord. They on their side declared Zwingli to have betrayed the cause in agreeing to accept the decision of the Council on spiritual matters. "You have no power," said Simon Stumpf, "to give the judgment into the hands of the City Fathers; judgment is already given; the Spirit of God

judges." The Council, however, accepted Zwingli's propositions and passed laws accordingly.

This meant, of course, that the breach between the two parties could not be bridged over. The "Spirituals" formally repudiated the now officially established Zwinglianism and all its ways. But the new sect grew. The meetings of the small handicraftsmen and journeymen that were assembled under the leadership of Grebel, Manz, and their friends, were continually increased by the accession of new members. In addition, the original strain of ecclesiastical radicalism, or anarchism if one likes, received an accession of strength from the sentiment of an oppressed class in which political and economic considerations mixed themselves up with religious enthusiasm. By the end of the year Zwingli had already begun to call in the aid of the secular arm to repress the sect which was now a serious obstacle to him in his work of organizing the new Church polity. Two months after the great debate in the City Council, Simon Stumpf was banished. Meanwhile progress was made by the Brethren in the adjacent country districts, a large number of peasants joining.

With the extension of the Brethren in numbers,

the rejection of infant baptism as a test-sign of adhesion became ever more prominent. Parents began to refuse to allow their children to be christened. At last an edict was issued forbidding the meetings of the body. Reublin, who had made himself particularly conspicuous in his attacks on the orthodox baptismal theory, was arrested, and it was made compulsory for parents to bring their children to the font. At the same time attempts were made, both in private interviews and public disputations, to convert the "Spirituals." This went on throughout the year 1524, till the whole city rang with the questions at issue, eagerly debated as they were, in every church and at every street corner.

Finally Zwingli issued a manifesto and announced a public disputation for January 18th, 1525. On this occasion, after having conclusively, as he deemed it, refuted the errors of the Brethren, he read out from the pulpit a new order of the Council visiting the refusal of infant baptism with expulsion from the city and its territory. Three days later several of the principal leaders received notice to quit within a week. Just at this time, an ex-priest, Georg Blaurock, (so-called from the blue costume he habitually wore)

who had recently come from the town of Chur and who had just become prominent, proposed to Grebel and Manz, who, as Zürich burghers, had not been exiled, to formally proclaim re-baptism a solemn duty for all Brethren. This was done on the historical occasion referred to in the passage from the "Geschichtsbücher" quoted earlier in this chapter. At this meeting, as we have already seen, Blaurock rose and called upon Grebel to baptize him in the true Christian Faith, which ceremony having been accomplished, all present received baptism at the hands of Blaurock. It appears to have been done with the object of showing their abhorrence of the idea of a hierarchy or of leaders at all. All who had been awakened to the true faith by the inward light, were entitled to receive baptism, and all who had received it were entitled to confer it on others. This event, which marks the beginning of the Anabaptist movement properly so-called, occurred on January 21st, 1525.

By the decision to constitute re-baptism a sign and seal of membership of their community, the "Brethren" definitely cut themselves loose from the rest of Christendom, Protestant no less than Catholic. It was the gauntlet thrown down to

the current Christianity in all its forms—to the new reformed doctrines represented by Luther and Zwingli no less than to the older Catholicism, against which their polemic had been directed. The notion of a community of the elect, surrounded by a wicked world with which it was at war, was naturally fostered by the new development things had taken. The change, slight as it seems to us, had an electrical effect. "Brethren with girdles of cords round their waists were to be seen in the streets and open places of Zürich, as well as in the country hard by, crying: 'Woe! woe!' foretelling for Zürich the fate of Niniveh, which would not listen to Jonah, exhorting to repentance, righteousness and brotherly love, and denouncing the dragon, as they called Zwingli, with all his abettors." [1]

[1] It should here be pointed out, in order to give a proper understanding of the effect produced, that in the adoption of the theory of re-baptism, the Zürich Brethren were quite original. Many of the reforming party opposed infant baptism. Indeed, Zwingli himself had originally favored this view; and, although the Brethren gave it special prominence from the beginning, it cannot be regarded as, in any way, a tenet distinctive in the sense of exclusive. With re-baptism it was otherwise. This had never been suggested before by any of the reforming parties.

A sharp persecution now began. The Rath ordered a number of arrests, amongst them those of Manz and Blaurock. Even severer punishments were tried in order to suppress the new teachings, but without avail. Suffering drew the Brethren closely together. Communistic doctrines now became part of the principles of the League of Zürich Brethren, and a practical attempt at a kind of family communism seems to have been started. A common fund was inaugurated from the wealthy members, out of which indigent Brethren might obtain what they liked. But the persecution succeeded in its immediate object. The Brethren, or the Anabaptists, as we may now term them, were well-nigh all driven from Zürich, and the little community in its original form was broken up and dispersed. The result was only to carry the seed of the new doctrines over the whole of northern Switzerland and southern Germany. Grebel repaired to Schaffhausen and Reublin to Waldshut. In the latter place Balthazar Hubmeyer definitely joined the new sect. This meant, of course, his separation from Zwingli and the orthodox Reformation. With Hubmeyer the reformed community of Waldshut was won over.

In Graubünden Anabaptist doctrines were preached by Manz and gained many adherents. Basel and Bern also became infected, while in St. Gallen and Appenzell the new teachings made a profound impression on the whole population.

The excitement leading to the great outburst of the Peasants War was favorable to the propaganda, but the war itself, especially the successes of the insurgents in its earlier stages, —successes which led many really to hope that the day of the peasant and the common man had at last come, and that he was in very deed about to crush the ecclesiastical and noble oppressor,—was not favorable to a doctrine that, at this period, proclaimed non-resistance as one of its cardinal tenets. During the course of the Peasant insurrection, to the great bulk of the population, the new Anabaptist preachers were confounded with the numberless theological agitators with which Germany then abounded.

Zwingli and the Zürich Council, keenly alive to the danger of the new departure in theological discipline, did not meanwhile rest satisfied with the mere expulsion of the sectaries from the town and territory. Zwingli published a

manifesto, designed to prove that infant baptism was an essential part of the Evangelical doctrine. Hubmeyer replied in a trenchant manner from the Anabaptist standpoint. Zwingli rejoined with an abusive attack on Hubmeyer. But in the end the clever theological disputant succeeded in establishing infant baptism and the heretical character of re-baptism on a dogmatic basis, which, if it did not convert the Anabaptists, at least proved satisfactory to his own followers. The question, said Zwingli, was not merely one of baptism, but of the introduction of schism and heresy generally into the Church. No one had any right, he continued, to leave the Church, but all were bound to submit to the decision of the majority in ecclesiastical matters, as indicated by the supreme authority of the State.

About midsummer, 1525, at a time that nearly coincided with the first serious defeats of the peasants, a persecution again broke out against the Anabaptists in the new localities, where, for the last few months, they had been planting their seed in comparative peace. In St. Gallen, notably, the Council began to take steps. First of all, it invited the new sectaries to a debate in the church of St. Laurenz. Meanwhile they

were enjoined to cease proselytising. As might be imagined these measures led to nothing. Finally the Bürgermeister of the town, Joachim von Watt, who, according to the practice of the time was also known as Vadianus, took a determined stand in opposition to the new propaganda. His standpoint was not so much that of theological opposition to the new tenets, for he had notably himself been opposed to infant baptism, but rather that of a statesman, or "man of order," who feared the methods of the new propaganda. All ecclesiastical changes, he maintained, must take place gradually so as not to endanger political stability. The practice of re-baptism, erected into an institution, he denounced as contrary to the preachings of the Apostles, and to the precepts of Holy Writ. Both Zwingli and Grebel left no stone unturned to influence the decision of the St. Gallen Council in favour of their respective sides. At last, on the 5th of June, a manifesto of the Bürgermeister against the Anabaptists, together with a reply of the latter, was publicly read before the Council. The result was a decree stringently forbidding re-baptism and also the "breaking of bread," the form of the sacrament adopted by the new Sect.

The punishment for the re-baptiser was imprisonment and banishment, for the re-baptized a heavy pecuniary fine.

The *Rath* then called together two hundred well-known citizens in order that they might be sworn in as a kind of special constables, to see to the carrying out of its decisions. One only refused the oath, and he was at once, with his family, expelled from the town. Thereupon followed the suppression of the Anabaptist community in St. Gallen. The persecution spread rapidly. In July Manz was arrested in Chur and handed over to the Zürich *Rath*. In August Hochmeister was banished from Schaffhausen. He went, however, to Zürich and "ratted" to the Zwinglian party, receiving his reward in consequence from Zwingli, who gave him an appointment. At the same time Bern also exiled the new teachers. In December, the town of Waldshut fell into the hands of the Austrian authorities, and there also the new doctrines and practices were suppressed. Hubmeyer, hotly pursued by the soldiers of the Archduke Ferdinand, fled in desperation to Zürich, where he was at once arrested and compelled to hold a public disputation with Zwingli. Hubmeyer

anticipated this by recantation, but on being forced to ascend the pulpit in order to advocate infant baptism, he startled his hearers by preaching a sermon against it. He was re-arrested, put to the torture, compelled to a triple recantation in public of the views he had expressed, and after having sworn an oath at once to leave and never re-enter Zürich territory, was dismissed.

The persecution throughout the Swiss cantons continued during 1526 and 1527. It did not, however, succeed by any means in entirely stamping out the movement even in Switzerland, while it had the effect of the dispersal of the leading spirits far and wide throughout southern Germany. During 1525, with the exception of Waldshut and a few places on the immediate confines of the Swiss territories, the movement had remained essentially local and Swiss. But in the spring of 1526, we already see signs of considerable Anabaptist activity in the southern provinces of the empire. Hubmeyer, leaving Zürich in April, repaired to Augsburg and later on to Nicolsburg in Moravia; where he settled down and once more took up the cause of Anabaptism. Tracts from his pen appeared in suc-

cession, but this did not hinder his preaching and teaching with his wonted energy.

The last of the leaders to forsake Switzerland was Blaurock, who, in the beginning of 1527, was flogged through the streets of Zürich, and thrown out at the city gate. He went to sow the seed of the new doctrines in Tyrol. Not alone the leaders, but numbers of the rank and file, whose names are unknown, felt a call to go a-preaching.

Hätzer, after a period of wavering, settled down in Strasburg, and in the summer of 1526 started an industrious propaganda in that city and in the Upper Rhenish districts generally. The Nürnberg schoolmaster, Hans Denck, also joined Hätzer in Strasburg. A former admirer of Thomas Münzer, Hans Hut from Hain in Franconia, was now won over to the new sect and to the doctrine of non-resistance. Hut, possessed alike of eloquence and untiring energy, proved a priceless acquisition to the movement. In proportion as, after the great defeat of 1525, despair of attaining their aims by insurrectionary methods gradually settled down on the peasantry and poor handicraftsmen, the Anabaptist doctrine spread like wild-fire; attracting to itself all the

elements from the earlier peasant and proletarian movements that had a similar religious coloring. At the same time the new elements that came in did not fail in the course of events, as we shall see, to change the character of the propaganda.

The movement, in its inception purely religious, took on an increasingly political colour. The purely voluntary communism in imitation of the supposed institutions of the early Christians, which the Zürich Brethren had instituted among themselves, became more and more raised to the position of a cardinal principle, whilst the non-resistance doctrine, in certain quarters began to fall into the background.

By the end of 1527 the new propaganda had done its work. The process of absorption was complete, and the great Anabaptist movement had entered upon its changeful and chequered career.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ANABAPTIST DOCTRINES AND PRACTICE.

SEBASTIAN FRANCK in his Chronik (III, fol. 188) observes, respecting the spread of the new movement, "the course of the Anabaptists was so swift, that their doctrines soon overspread the whole land and they obtained much following, baptized thousands and drew many good hearts to them; for they taught, as it seemed, naught but love, faith and endurance, showing themselves in much tribulation patient and humble. They brake bread with one another as a sign of oneness and love, helped one another truly with precept, lending, borrowing, giving; taught that all things should be in common and called each other 'Brother.' They increased so suddenly that the world did fear a tumult for reason of them. Though of this, as I hear, they have in all places been found innocent. They are persecuted in many parts with great tyranny, cast into bonds and tormented, with burning, with sword, with fire, with water, and with much imprison-

ment, so that in few years in many places a multitude of them have been undone, as is reported to the number of two thousand, who in divers places have been killed." "And," he adds, "they suffer as martyrs with patience and steadfastness." This judgment of a contemporary, as to the general impression made by the new party, for by the end of the second decade of the century it had attained dimensions which entitled it to be called so, is amply confirmed from other sources.

As we have seen in the last chapter, after the suppression of the Peasants Revolt, the sect inaugurated by the Spiritual Brethren of Zürich rapidly absorbed all similar sects and tendencies. The process of conversion and absorption, as we shall see later on, at first confined to South Germany, began from the year 1527 onward to spread northward along the Valley of the Rhine. Our task in the present chapter is to indicate the main lines of the tendencies characterising the movement—tendencies which maintained themselves with more or less constancy, but with varying fortune, throughout the course of its career.

Heinrich Bullinger in his book against the

Anabaptists, ("*Der Wiedertäufferen Ursprung, Furgang, Secten, Wesen,*" etc., pp. 17—55), the first edition of which was published in 1531, and the second in 1560, enumerates thirteen distinct sects, as he terms them, within the Anabaptist body. The general tenets of the organization he gives in the form of twenty-five propositions, which may be summarized as follows: — They regard themselves as the true Church of Christ well pleasing to God; they believe that by re-baptism a man is received into the Church; they refuse to hold intercourse with other Churches or to recognize their ministers; they say that the preachings of these are different from their works, that no man is the better for their preaching, that their ministers follow not the teaching of Paul, that they take payment from their benifices, but do not work by their hands; that the Sacraments are improperly served, and that every man, who feels the call, has the right to preach; they maintain that the literal text of the Scriptures shall be accepted without comment or the additions of theologians; they protest against the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone; they maintain that true Christian love makes it inconsistent for any Christian to

be rich, but that among the Brethren all things should be in common, or at least all available for the assistance of needy Brethren and for the common Cause; the preachers of the official Reformation, they maintain, mix up the Old Testament with the New, unmindful of the fact that for the Christian the New Testament has superseded and abolished the Old;[1] they declare it untrue, as the Lutheran and Zwinglian preachers allege, that the soul flies from the body straight to heaven, for it sleeps until the Last Day; they maintain that the preachers rely too much on the secular arm; that the attitude of the Christian towards authority should be that of submission and endurance only; that no Christian ought to take office of any kind; that secular authority has no concern with religious belief; that the Christian resists no evil, and therefore needs no law-courts nor should ever make use of the tribunals; that Christians do not kill or punish with imprisonment or the sword, but only with exclusion from the body of believers; that no man should be compelled

[1] This doctrine was certainly not universal. The Münsterites, for example, seem to have rated the Old Testament higher than the New.

by force to believe, nor should any be slain on account of his faith; that Christians do not resist, and hence, do not go to war; that Christians may not swear; that all oaths are sinful; that infant baptism is of the Pope and the Devil; that re-baptism, or, better, adult-baptism, is the only true Christian baptism; that the Lutheran and Zwinglian preachers make no distinction of persons, allowing sinners, as well as others, to receive the Sacrament, which should be reserved for the elect, that is, for such as by being re-baptized are received into the comm unity of the saints.

We may fairly take the above doctrines given by Bullinger as representing, on the whole, what we may term the common ground of Anabaptism. There were, however, numerous variations within the body. Bullinger cites in the first place the "Apostolic Baptists." These, he says, "wander through the land without staff, shoe, satchel or money, glorifying their heavenly call to the office of preacher." "They wash each other's feet," Franck tells us, "saying that they would become as the true children." They literally followed the precept that he who would be a disciple must leave house and home, wife and child. Here we have plainly, as Bullinger

himself remarks, an after-glow of the tendencies which three centuries earlier called the friars into being, and notably the Franciscans.

Some of the offshoots of that order, it may be remarked in passing, like other of the earlier mediæval communist sects, the "Paterines," "The Brothers and Sisters of the Spirit," "the Bohemian Brethren," and many others, anticipate many of the doctrines and tendencies which manifested themselves for the last time in religious form on a great scale in history in the Anabaptists of the 16th century. Their repudiation of all personal property was emphatic; they preached barefooted and in coarse garments, wherever they went. With a greeting of peace, they would enter a cottage and begin to expound the Bible to the inmates. The effect on their hearers, caused by their words glowing with enthusiasm, was oftentimes startling. It commonly required but a few hours to found a congregation. Having baptized a sufficient number of persons to constitute a nucleus, the Anabaptist apostle would take his staff in hand and journey farther to the next village or homestead.

Out of many we quote one instance of how the sudden sense of a call to preach would

sometimes affect these new converts. A peasant, Hans Ber of Alten-Erlangen, rose from his bed one night and began to put on his clothes. "Whither goest thou?" asked his wife. "I know not, God knoweth," was his answer. She entreated him to stay, with the words: "What evil have I done thee? Stay here and help me nourish my little children." "Dear wife," he replied," harry me not with the things of time. God bless thee. I will from hence, that I may learn the will of the Lord." [1]

Bullinger is clearly wrong in reckoning the "Apostolic Baptists," as he terms them, as representing any special section of the body. They were obviously no more than the most enthusiastic and energetic members. A similar remark applies to more than one of the subsequent divisions into which Bullinger would partition the Anabaptist party.

The next of Bullinger's so-called Anabaptist sects he terms the "Separate Spiritual Baptists."

[1] Cornelius, "*Geschichte des Münsterischen aufruhrs*," II, pp. 48, 49. For a similar instance of the effect of religious exaltation on the mediæval peasant mind, see "*German Society*," Appendix B, p. 270. Its immediate occasion was an anti-Jewish campaign of Hubmeyer in his Catholic days.

These, he says, carry their aloofness from the world to the extent that, like a new order of monks, they regulate their clothes alike as to their form and size, they reject all costly clothing, they make also rules as to eating, drinking, sleeping, resting, standing and walking. If they saw anyone merry, they would admonish him in the name of the Gospel. After his usual refutation of the particular "errors" in question, Bullinger passes on to his next "sect," which he terms the "Holy and Sinless Baptists." Their special distinction consisted in the dogma that the elect could not sin. They carried this point so far as to strike out of the Paternoster the words "forgive us our trespasses." They appear to have held a kind of antinomian doctrine, which has often appeared in the history of theologico-ethical speculation, to the effect that the baptized believer might do what he liked, since, if he sinned, it effected the body alone, with which his soul had no more to do than with any of the other things of this world.

The next of Bullinger's sects, "the Silent Brothers," held that preaching was no longer necessary and should be abolished. "This is

the time," said they, "of which the apostle Paul speaketh when he saith: 'there is a time to be silent.'" "Accordingly," says Bullinger, "if any man should ask them aught of religion, they would be silent and give him no answer."

The next "sect" designated by Bullinger is the "Praying Baptists," who, he says, do nothing else but pray. Through prayer, they maintain, all evil is to be averted.

What Bullinger calls the seventh "sect" (really the sixth according to his enumeration) are the "Ecstatic Brothers," also called "*enthusiasti*" and "*ecstatici*," who, he says, were very numerous in the early stages of the movement. They claimed to see visions and to dream dreams, and generally to be the direct recipients of divine revelations. When under the influence of the Spirit, their countenances were contorted, they made deprecatory gestures, fell on the ground as in a fit, and finally lay stretched out, as though they were dead. When they awoke from their trance, they related wonderful stories of what they had seen in the other world. Amongst other admonitions was, of course, always the assurance that re-baptism alone was pleasing to God, but infant baptism

a service of the devil, and that none that were not re-baptized could enter the kingdom of God. Some of them alleged having seen Zwingli in hell. They prefaced their utterances with the words: "The Father hath said it: it is the Father's will!" They all agreed in declaring that the Day of the Lord was at hand, some of them venturing even to give the date and the hour of the Last Judgment. They would rush through the streets, crying: "We proclaim the day of the Lord!"

We next come to the "Free Brothers," called by Bullinger the eighth "sect." They took the idea of Christian freedom in its literal sense, holding it as unchristian to pay tithes or interest or even the principal of debts. They declared all serfdom and villeinage to be abolished, though there were some among them, adds Bullinger, "who, to be more modest, thought that, although not justifiable or obligatory in itself, yet that one should observe these things toward the heathen, to the end that they might have no ground or cause for blaspheming the Word." All were agreed, however, that amongst Christians villeinage had ceased to exist. Among these Free Brethren, according to Bullinger, there

were those who persuaded credulous women that it was impossible for them to be saved without sacrificing their virtue, for, said they, the Lord hath said, that only he who was willing to lose all he held dear might enter the kingdom of Heaven. Shame and disgrace must be borne for the sake of Christ, for had not Christ said that the publicans and the harlots should enter first into the kingdom of Heaven, before the righteous, by which was plainly meant that women should become harlots, as, by so doing they would rank in Heaven before those who were deemed by the world to be pious women. The antinomian doctrine of course came in here, according to which, for the re-baptized, sin was impossible, as no bodily act could affect the soul of the believer. "For the women did sin in having intercourse with their husbands, who were still heathens, but they did not sin when having intercourse with 'brethren', because in that case there was a spiritual bond between them." Those who held these views, however, were called by many of their co-religionists "wild brothers."

Bullinger's ninth order of the Anabaptists consists of another sort of Free Brothers, who

preached that all outward forms were to the believer indifferent; public worship, preaching, sacraments were all of no effect, and for those who were saved, so much useless lumber. They regarded it also as indifferent, whether faith were confessed or not. If danger threatened, it was admissible to conceal one's faith, for, said they, if one have the truth in one's heart, it suffices before God, and what is proclaimed before men is indifferent. As a consequence it was, they said, useless for men to deliver themselves over to torture and death for the sake of their belief, for God is not made greater by our suffering, neither does he desire our death; nay, nor even that we forsake wife and child. The corollary was obvious, to wit, that those who were at Rome, should do as Rome does, that the outward forms and observances enjoined by the authority under whose jurisdiction the believer found himself, should be observed. The chief apostle of this doctrine was one David Georg, of whom we shall hear more later.

The tenth "sect" in Bullinger's enumeration is the Hutian Brothers, that is the followers of Johannes Hut. Johannes Hut soon abandoned the original non-resistance doctrine of the Anabaptists,

in favor of the theory, that they, as the living representatives of the Chosen People, were commissioned like the Israelites of old to root out the heathen that then ruled the world, as the Israelites had once destroyed the godless Canaanites. The Lord, said he, will show them a proper time, when this work of his shall be accomplished. He and his followers were untiring in proclaiming the approaching day of the Lord's Vengeance on the powers of this world. In accordance with this view, they took no thought for their property or livelihood. The Communistic tendency, it need hardly be said, was strongly represented among them.

Bullinger's "eleventh sect" is the "Augustin Baptists," taking their name from a preacher named Augustin Heling from Bohemia. Like the Hutians, says Bullinger, "they prefer dreams to the written word of God." They hold that Heaven remains closed till the Day of Judgment. There is, say they, neither saint in Heaven nor godless in Hell, but each will be preserved, till that time, in a certain place, they knew not where. At the last day of judgment, however, they will be severally relegated to their own

place. This terminates the series of the various doctrines and tendencies of the Anabaptist party, and of the sections embodying them.

The "twelfth sect" of Bullinger, consisting simply in the great Anabaptist movement at Münster, must be taken as expressing the various tendencies already enumerated, the greater number of which may be traced prominently in the course of the history of the Münster insurrection. Bullinger's thirteenth and concluding sect has nothing specially to do with the Anabaptists, but consists of Michael Servet and those who followed him in his denial of the dogma of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ; among whom, Bullinger alleges, there were many Anabaptists. This was undoubtedly the case, since the tendency of Anabaptism generally was in the direction of breaking through trammels of all kinds, dogmatic, ceremonial, and ecclesiastical; but we can hardly regard it as specially distinctive of the Anabaptist movement, since it was common to other reforming sects and does not seem to have been, as in their case, embodied in any definite formula or confession of faith.

It will be observed that many of these divi-

sions, as given by Bullinger, overlap each other in more ways than one. We find certain tendencies running through them all, and it would not be difficult to deduce the divergencies, even when they seem to contradict one another, from the fundamental positions of the Inner Light as the last court of appeal, from the right of private interpretation of Scripture, from the contempt for all human authority secular or ecclesiastical, and from the claim of the Brethren to be the chosen people separate from the world and under the immediate guidance of God alone.

The second chief contemporary authority on the doctrines and practices of the Anabaptists is Sebastian Franck. He agrees in the main with the account of Bullinger, always taking into consideration the fact that Bullinger was a bitter opponent of the new sect in all its forms and manifestations. Franck, on the other hand, was less bitter in his hostility, at least to the milder aspects of Anabaptist theory and practice. This, as the reader will have already seen, was in the last resort simply a recrudescence over a wider area, and on an extended scale, of tendencies and even actual doctrines, that we meet

with springing up in different places and at different times throughout the Middle Ages, and which were increasing in intensity and in frequency from the beginning of the last half of the 15th century onwards till the great upheaval known as the Reformation.

Sebastian Franck's account is contained in the chapter of his "Chronik" entitled: "Articles and doctrines of the Anabaptists condemned as heresies by the Pope as well as by diverse other sects." Franck does not adopt Bullinger's classification of the various Anabaptist sects; but his account, in substance, tallies almost down to the minutest detail with that of Bullinger. Some, he says, recognizing re-baptism as essential, will not acknowledge anyone as brother who has not been re-baptized. Others again, regarding themselves as saints and elect, form a special community, holding all property in common; others again, confine themselves to a recognition of the duty of assisting Brethren in want. The Brother in want, however, is supposed to be unwilling to receive this charity. "But there is in this matter," says Franck, "much hypocrisy, faithlessness and lying, as they themselves are well aware." In some places as in

Austerlitz, in Moravia, they have a common store from which the steward distributes to each that which he needs; but whether the distribution be just, Franck says, he has not investigated. They denounce other Brethren, he says, whom they deem not to be walking in the right path, and this is common with them, since every community among them outlaws other Brethren, who do not subscribe to its views. Other Baptists "hold the Brotherhood and common holding of goods we have just cited, as of no moment, deeming it needless and presumptuous on the part of those Brethren who give themselves out for perfect Christians and despise others. In this sect every man worketh for himself, and the members do help and question each other, and give their hand in a manner, as seemeth to me, to savour of hypocrisy, albeit I hold no man to blame who doeth such things with sincerity." God hath stopped the ears of him, they say, who doth not answer "yea" to all their doctrines. At the first they pray for him, but if he be not speedily converted they cast him out. Some, says Franck, will not make merry on the Sunday because they hold it a feast-day and ordination of Antichrist, while

others again do not object to the customary spending of Sunday, but keep it for the love of man, and deny that the Scripture says that they should separate themselves in this way from the rest of the world. Many of them explain the Scriptures in such wise that to the pure all things are pure. Some will have nothing to do with the heathen; they have rules for fasting, feasting, living, eating, drinking and walking; also as to clothes, as to how many folds are lawful in an apron. They quote Romans XII: "Ye shall not conform to this world, for friendship with the world is enmity with God."

Franck goes on to notice other sects (treated of by Bullinger), as his so-called Apostolic Baptists, who aim at practising Scripture literally, washing each other's feet, and journeying about from place to place preaching, etc.; and the Free Baptists, who maintain that, being saved, they can commit no evil, etc. The greater part, he says, hold that the way to salvation is only through suffering and an ascetic life. He also refers to the Silent Brothers, who do not believe in preaching; the forerunners apparently of the English Quakers of more than a century later. He also speaks of those who go into

ecstacies and trances, and who, on recovering, prophesy and profess to have been translated into another world. This faculty they claim to have in common with the apostle Paul, who says he was carried into the third heaven.

It will be seen that Sebastian Franck confirms in every respect Bullinger's statements with regard to the Anabaptist party. From both writers it is clear that, as in the case of earlier sects having similar tendencies, such as the Taborites and Bohemian Brethren, there was a thorough-going or extreme, and a moderate or opportunist party. A domestic communism was one of the leading characteristics of the former, as the recognition of the rights of private property up to a certain point, subject to the duty of almsgiving to needy Brethren, was that of the latter.

There was a certain body of the Brethren who, according to Franck, wished to carry their communism into the matter of wives, but, he says, they were soon suppressed by the other Brethren. Hans Hut and Ludwig Hätzer are stated to have held and propagated this view. We have already seen what Bullinger has to say as to the views on sexual matters of certain of

the Brethren. Whether Franck refers to these same followers of Hut and Hätzer it is difficult to say. Similar doctrines and practices had also obtained among the "Adamites" in Bohemia the century before, as also among the "Brothers and Sisters, of the free Spirit" in the earlier Middle Ages.

The general arrangements of the Anabaptist communities were very simple; re-baptism was a sign of reception into the Brotherhood of believers. Every community had its superintendent, who was called Teacher or Shepherd. He was sometimes designated by the original founder of the brotherhood in question, and was sometimes chosen by the body of the members. Special persons were also appointed for looking after the poor, and those Brethren having the gift of oratory were often sent forth to spread the Word as apostles. The function of the Shepherd was teaching, exhortation and prayer. He also had to perform the ceremony of bread-breaking and to pronounce the sentence of expulsion on recalcitrant members in the name of the community. These simple forms were, however, the outward indications. Behind the meetings of the community for Bible reading and mutual exhortation, behind the breaking of bread, the

Anabaptist "Sacrament," were duties and obligations and a general regulation of life on the basis of the common principles, a regulation enforced by the moral influence of the community upon each member. The rules relating to property, which always involved at least the duty of assisting the community alike individually and collectively, were obligatory upon every member. These rules ranged, as we have seen, from a kind of compulsory almsgiving to complete communism. Then there was prohibition of swearing, of the bearing of the sword, of the exercise of any governmental function, of going to law. To crown all, in a vast majority of Anabaptist communities, there was the express injunction upon all members to keep separate from the world, to have no part nor lot with the heathen, that is, with non-baptists. All who were without the fold were declared to be an abomination to God. This was carried so far that even the wine-shops and the guild-rooms were for the most part "taboo" to the Brother. The Anabaptists dressed simply in plain homespun, without ornament or trimming of any description. They called each other "brother" and "sister," and employed as their greeting the

words "Peace be with thee," accompanied by the holy kiss.

Their sacrament of bread-breaking, which, with the exception of baptism, was their only ceremony, was regarded as symbolical of the renewal of the covenant with God, and the confirmation of brotherly love amongst themselves. This was usually preceded by a public confession of sins and by an exhortation on the part of the Shepherd, who, in extreme cases, would of his own initiative exclude a sinning member from the ceremony. After the bread-breaking followed the sermon with its exhortation to mutual forbearance and to the regarding of all things temporal or spiritual as a common possession of the Brethren; to prayer for enemies, and to the returning of good for evil. The ceremony of bread-breaking was frequently performed in times of persecution, and almost invariably when any great danger threatened.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the Anabaptists recognized no relation to the State as such. The State, in their opinion, belonged to the realm of darkness with which the Brethren had nothing in common. It was only designed by

God as a scourge for true Christians. The Brethren should obey it rather too much than too little, should quietly bear tribulation and persecution, awaiting the day of the Lord, which was fast approaching. Its signs were everywhere apparent, the Gospel everywhere preached and persecution suffered for the name of Christ. The fig tree was blooming, they said, the summer was nigh and the Kingdom of God at hand (Cornelius, "*Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs*," II, pp. 8—51).

But owing to the want of united organization, to the heterogeneity of the elements which soon became absorbed into the party, to the nature of its fundamental dogmas and other causes, a tendency to rupture early showed itself. The doctrine of non-resistance and obedience to authority was, as already mentioned, by no means everywhere accepted in its literal sense. The question of property-holding was, as may be imagined, a great bone of contention. That of the right or duty of cohabitation with a husband or wife (as the case might be) who was outside the fold was also hotly debated. In their theology it was the same with the Anabaptists. They were not bound together by any

formal theological confession of faith. Without the infringement of any recognized principle of the body, Johannes Denck could preach the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of the damned and Ludwig Hätzer his denial of the dogma of the divinity of Christ. As we have seen, there were even some communities or congregations who declared all ceremonies, not excepting baptism and bread-breaking, the central and the only pillars of the Anabaptist cultus, as superfluous. So great, indeed, was the divergence, alike in doctrine and practice, between the different Anabaptist communities that Franck, with allowable exaggeration, intimates that they had as many different sects as they had shepherds or superintendents, and concludes with the observation: "There are many more sects and opinions, which I do not all know and cannot describe, but it seems to me that there are not two to be found who agree with each other on all points."

The Anabaptist Church or party was, owing to the conditions of the time, kept in a continual state of flux as regards its constituents. The communities frequently changed alike in membership as in shepherds. In the most favorable

case it was exceedingly difficult to hold any number of different communities together, even imperfectly, while with the rapid spread of the sect anything like cohesion of the body became out of the question.

The numerous peripatetic preachers or apostles would in many cases enter a village or marketplace, a workshop or the public room of a hostelry, preach to all who would hear, found a congregation or community, few or many, as the case might be, baptize, "break bread," possibly appoint a shepherd or superintendent from among the more zealous of their converts, and after a few hours pass on their way to repeat the same process in the next town or village. The communities thus left to themselves naturally developed various tendencies in accordance with the character of the leading spirit among them.

The success of the itinerant missionaries of course pre-supposed a soil well prepared to receive the seed, often sown in a very perfunctory fashion. The doctrines they had to offer, belonged to the atmosphere of the time. (Compare the remarks made on religious and political propaganda in the Middle Ages in "*German Society*," pp. 87—91).

Although not so systematic in his attempt to delineate the theories and practices of the Anabaptists as either Bullinger or Franck, we have a third most important and interesting eye-witness of events connected with the movement in Johannes Kessler, a well-known theologian of the time and a native of St. Gallen. Kessler in his "*Sabbata*," a chronicle of the events between 1523 and 1539, devotes considerable space to interesting details concerning the progress of the Anabaptists, especially in his native territory. [1]

After describing the origin of Anabaptism in Zürich and its general character, in terms similar to those of Bullinger and Franck, Kessler proceeds to relate incidents in its career in St. Gallen and Appenzell. His account may fairly be taken as typically illustrative of the nature of the new movement, and the effects produced by its doctrines on overwrought or unhinged temperaments so common in that period of religious excitement and exaltation. A certain Wolfgang Wolimann,

[1] We here quote from the edition of the "*Sabbata*" edited by Dr. Ernst Goetsinger, St. Gallen, 1870. The facts relating to the Anabaptists referred to in the text will be found in Book III, pp. 225—305.

a citizen of St. Gallen, who had previously preached against infant baptism, by chance met Konrad Grebel on a journey to Schaffhausen, and under the latter's instructions accepted the new doctrines with such enthusiasm that he was not satisfied with having a bowl of water emptied over his head in the usual fashion, but insisted upon undressing and upon his whole body being ducked in the Rhine by Grebel. This was the origin of baptism by immersion. On his return home he boasted of revelations received, with the result of creating amongst various townspeople a violent curiosity to hear him. Day and place were fixed: the day, the 10th of March; the place, the Weavers' guild-room on the market-place of St. Gallen. A large number were assembled, when Wolimann, entering, began his discourse with the declaration that the heavenly Father had revealed to him that he should not preach His Word in the churches, for, said he, "there is no truth preached, neither may the truth be preached there." Thereupon a discussion arose, in which it was pointed out that the Apostles were willing to preach the word in the temple and synagogues; that hence there was no reason why Wolimann should not do so;

but Wolimann was obdurate and succeeded in convincing a certain number of those present, who, henceforward shunned the churches as the portals of hell, holding their meetings in houses, fields, and woods. This, says Kessler, was the first split in the Evangelical Church of St. Gallen and the beginning of Anabaptism in that region.

A few days later, Konrad Grebel, who, as we know, had been banished from Zürich in January, and had been for several weeks past proselytizing the northern territories of Switzerland, arrived himself in St. Gallen. The followers of Wolimann, and indeed all those who were disaffected towards the official Protestantism, streamed out at the city gate on the Sunday, which happened to be Palm Sunday, to meet the famous sectary, which they did in a village hard by. Many were there and then re-baptized. Grebel was then taken to the Weavers' guild-room. The weavers were well to the fore in this movement as in other previous similar movements. Grebel held forth on infant baptism and the Bible. He seems, however, to have been averse to anything like disputation, alleging that those who wished to have converse with him should come to him "naked" as he expressed it, by which he meant

with a humble and teachable disposition and not with a desire to dispute.

The St. Gallen communist soon began actual preaching in the neighbouring villages and small towns. The Evangelical preachers were denounced, and their hearers persuaded to drive them from their parishes. Here, as elsewhere, the great subject of the polemic was infant baptism. "Because," says Kessler, "they are themselves unlearned, they despise all learning, proclaiming that revelation and the inner light come only to the simple and ignorant." At the same time he admits that "their walk and conversation are throughout pious, holy, and blameless." They avoided costly apparel, despising luxurious eating and drinking, clothed themselves with rough cloth, covering their heads with slouch hats Their way and their manner were humble. "They carry no weapon, neither sword nor dagger, save it be a broken bread-knife, declaring that the sheep durst not wear the wolf's clothing. They swear not, nay, not even take they the civic oath to any authority; and should one of them transgress in this, he will be banished by them, for there is a daily purging of members among them. In speech and disputation they

are grim and bitter and are withal so stubborn that they are willing to die for that which they maintain. They proclaim more insistently justification by works than even the Papists." ("*Sabbata*," III, p. 232). Yet their numbers daily increased. Of the exterior circumstances of the Anabaptist Church of St. Gallen we have, however, spoken in the last chapter. We are here only concerned with the details of the inner life of the movement preserved for us by Kessler, as illustrating its character generally.

It is related how one of the new sect, a peasant, hailing from the village of Zollikon, near Zürich, appeared, demanding that all books should be burned as vain and pernicious products of mere human learning This he attempted to carry out; many persons bringing him their literary chattels to increase his bonfire. This same peasant, Hans Fessler by name, once rose up in the church at Zürich as Zwingli was preaching, and shouted: "Zwingli, I adjure thee by the living God that thou dost declare the truth." Zwingli at first took no notice, going on with his discourse; but as Fessler continued the disturbance Zwingli finally answered: "So then I will declare the truth unto thee, that thou art

a rude, ill-bred tumultuous peasant." This seemed to be regarded by the congregation as a distinct score of Zwingli, and, according to our author, the conduct of the interrupter did harm to the cause in Zürich.

One of the Zurich Brethren preached the new gospel far and wide in the Appenzell territory with the gloss of his own that as they would follow Christ they must obey his injunction that they were to become as little children, if they wished to possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Accordingly many persons, especially women, began to conduct themselves as though they were children, aping childish ways, jumping up, clapping their hands, sitting down naked on the ground, letting themselves be washed like children, throwing apples at each other, stringing fir-cones on a piece of thread, and the better they succeeded in acting the part of children the more closely they believed themselves to be following Christ's word. Women cut their hair off round their ears like men, holding it for vanity and foolishness to plait their tresses, "but," observes Kessler, "there was more vanity displayed, and more needless labor given in the endeavour to hold the ends together behind the

ears with silk ribbons than though they had worn their hair like other women."

Other prophets arose among the Brethren, emphasizing various points or starting new interpretations. The New Testament should be received in the spirit and not in the letter, said they. Some of them even went so far as to throw their Bibles into the fire, saying that "the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive," and that "God would write his law in their hearts." Thereupon they would sit still, declaring that men had no free will, but that God worked everything in them, and that they would wait till God spoke to them. For the same reason they refused to pray, saying that God would give them what was right without their asking. They neither greeted anyone nor answered a greeting, but went about in silence.

Kessler goes on to relate cases of violent religious mania as occurring amongst the Anabaptists. Margeretha Hattinger of Zollikon near Zürich, declaring that she was God, began to utter meaningless sounds. A native of St. Gallen, Magdalena Müller by name, declared that she was Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Two companions of hers also became infected,

falling on the ground and raving. After lying for two or three hours unconscious, one of them declared that she had heard God's living voice. This woman, with others, subsequently entered houses and workrooms, calling upon all to meet outside the town at a given place. Here the woman, Frena Bumenin by name, announced that she was destined to give birth to the Anti-christ, and thereupon proceeded to divest herself of her clothing, and finally stood naked before the assembled crowd. In the night she rushed forth, notwithstanding that it was mid-winter, with frost and snow on the ground, and plunged into the neighbouring brook. At last she was arrested and brought back into the town, shrieking continuously the while that the day of the Lord was at hand. The bürgermeister and council having in vain endeavoured to persuade her to go home to Appenzell, her native place, she was imprisoned in a building just outside the town-walls. Here her conduct was so outrageous that the worthy Kessler prefers to omit any mention thereof, in order "not to trouble the Spirit of the Christian reader." On being liberated, she roamed through the Appenzell territories, joining herself to the already excited peasants who came

in her way. Many of these peasants destroyed their own property or cast it out of the door of their homesteads, saying that God would care for them.

The whole territory seems to have been infected with an epidemic of mania. Women would rush without their clothes to the meetings of the Brethren, and only after some time become conscious that they were naked. The suppression of the public assemblies only led to meetings being held by night in the homesteads. The seizures, the fallings on the ground and ravings, repeated themselves again and again. One of those thus afflicted told Kessler that the convulsions, in most cases, occurred against the will of the patient, many children of tender years being also seized. A certain man, Thomas Schugger by name, set up as a prophet, and after many extraordinary doings ended by persuading his brother Leonhardt to let him bind him. The following night Leonhardt declared to Thomas that it was the Lord's will that he should cut off his (Leonhardt's) head, which he did the next morning. Afterwards, covered only with a shirt, he rushed into the houses of certain eminent citizens. He was

arrested and executed eight days subsequently outside the walls. This did not prevent certain of his followers from continuing to represent the crime as inspired by God.

Kessler relates that many went from the extreme of simplicity in clothing to that of costliness. He makes also startling statements as to the sensuality practised by the sectaries on the plea that their souls were dead to the flesh and that all that the flesh did was by the will of God. He relates that two young women were arrested and confessed to having prostituted themselves under the mantle of the Gospel. They appear to have recanted, but were nevertheless condemned to carry a large stone on a pole from gate to gate round the town to the *Rathhaus*.

It must not be supposed, however, although religious abberation, interspersed with cases of actual insanity and even acute mania, was undoubtedly common throughout the whole Anabaptist movement, that this represented the teaching and practices of the great mass of the Brethren.

We have given the substance of Johannes Kessler's account of the Anabaptists in northern

Switzerland and especially in St. Gallen at some length, as that of a contemporary and in many cases an eye-witness. It is especially interesting as such, but it must of course be remembered that, though his account may in the main be true, Kessler is a hostile witness. Even he himself admits that the original heads of the movement, such as Konrad Grebel and Felix Manz, repudiated entirely much of the teaching and practice that had been grafted on to their doctrine. The Anabaptist theory, notwithstanding that it always had the tendency from first to last, like all similar movements, to run on occasion into this class of excess, producing in susceptible subjects religious mania, moved, as a whole, within the limits of the general religious consciousness of the age, and represented a genuine attempt to carry out logically, principles of the Gospel-teaching and the idea of a return to a supposed primitive Christianity, common, more or less, (at least theologically) to all the leaders of the reformation. It was a movement constituted in the main of the disinherited classes of the time, the peasants, the poorer handicraftsmen and the journeymen of the towns, to whose oppressed position, economi-

ally and politically, it powerfully appealed. It was thus pre-eminently a class-movement closely interwoven with the material conditions affecting vast sections of the population in that period of the closing Middle Ages. Like its immediate precursor, the movement which gave rise to the great Peasants War of 1525, it appeared in a mediæval garb: but, as before said, the tendencies, which in earlier periods of the Middle Ages had been sporadic and transitory, now became general and showed symptoms of acquiring permanency.

The common characteristics of the network of Anabaptist communities or congregations, which between 1525 and 1530 spread themselves over the Germanic populations of the Continent, from Bern in the south to Amsterdam in the north, from Strasburg in the west to Vienna in the east, will be sufficiently apparent to the reader from the foregoing pages. It will be readily seen from them that a centralised organisation in the true sense of the word never existed. At most we find a loose federation between the communities of a district. The only real bond uniting these widely-spread fraternities, with the possible exception of their

characteristic ceremonies of adult baptism and bread-breaking, was rather a common sentiment and intellectual tendency than any hard-and-fast system of dogma or ritual. The twenty-five propositions, enumerated by Bullinger, as constituting the common basis of the Anabaptist doctrine, were doubtless accepted by the vast majority of the religious communities of the Anabaptists. But, as Bullinger himself shows, there were not wanting individual leaders and even entire communities of the Brethren who dissented from many even of the tenets that were in general regarded as fundamental. In fine, though the general tendencies of Anabaptism were unmistakable, the specific doctrines held by its adherents presented many marked variations.

## CHAPTER III.

### PERSECUTION OF THE ANABAPTISTS AND DEATH OF THE EARLIER LEADERS.

At first the attitude of the authorities towards the new sect was somewhat hesitating. Like Zwingli in Zürich, the spiritual and temporal powers of other towns made some show of giving the Anabaptists a fair hearing, and instituted public disputations. It was expected, of course, that they should accept the refutations of the pastors and masters who were appointed for the purpose of refuting them. When, as might have been supposed, the disputants having failed to come to an understanding, the Anabaptists would not repent and acknowledge themselves as beaten, resort had to be taken to other measures. St. Gallen, Basel and Bern, besides Zürich, tried the persuasive method of disputation without any tangible results. The inevitable change to persecution followed.

The Governments, although agreed as to the

principle of non-toleration of dissentients from the established creed, whether Catholic or Protestant, were by no means all of the same mind as to the severity of the measures necessary to stamp out the new doctrine.

The Archduke Ferdinand of Austria issued on August 26th, 1527, an Imperial mandate condemning Anabaptism and threatening the followers of such doctrine with the punishment of death. On October 16th of the same year, he had more than two thousand copies of this mandate printed and distributed over the different provinces of the Empire. The Catholic territories and cities were, as might have been expected, the first to adopt extreme courses. They were stimulated by another Imperial mandate of January 4th, 1528, reminding them that, according alike to the Spiritual and temporal law, re-baptism was punishable with death, and exhorting the authorities throughout the Empire to proceed with rigour in accordance with the legal provisions in the matter. For the Catholic powers this was all right, but it was impossible for the new Evangelical (Protestant) principalities and cities to admit the validity of Imperial laws and edicts in religious matters; since they would

have been at once themselves confronted with the Edict of Worms (1520) and with the opening up of a limitless vista of consequences otherwise, which would place them in an impossible position. Not that the heads of the official Reformation yielded one whit to the Catholics in the ill-will they bore the new comers, but the idea of starting a persecution on their own account by virtue of their local authority was as yet not quite familiar to them. Hence a certain hesitancy and reluctance to leave the path of persuasion and argument. Various lights of the official protestantism were entrusted or entrusted themselves with the mission of controversially destroying the leading positions of the Anabaptists. In the discourses and literature that resulted, the to us unimportant but at that time essential question of re-baptism occupied the foremost place. But with all the disputation, spoken and written on the subject, little impression was made. Martin Butzer of Strasburg, clever theological logic-chopper as he was, was forced to admit that, during four years almost exclusively devoted to this class of activity, he could only boast of one convert.

Elsewhere there was a disposition to treat

the Anabaptists as political criminals. The remembrance of the Peasants War and the part played in it by similar doctrines, doctrines now embraced, moreover, by the very same classes and in some cases even the very persons who had taken part in the great rebellion, naturally strengthened this way of looking at the matter.

In a pamphlet published at the time bearing the title: "*Neue Zeitung von den Wiedertäufferen und ihrer sect, neulich erwachsen im Shifte zu Salzburg und an andern enden*," etc. (1528),[1] we are told how the new Sect was spreading in Salzburg as elsewhere; how its votaries met and held conventicles in out-of-the-way places; how those who were baptized made over their possessions to the Brotherhood; how they refused to go more to the "stone temples" to hear mass, etc. A report being spread that the brethren proposed on Christmas Eve, 1527, to massacre all priests and monks, an ex-priest, who was one of their chief preachers, and thirty-two of his hearers were arrested not far from the town by five men-at-arms. Of these the

[1] ("*New tractate touching the Anabaptists and their sect newly arisen and grown up in the diocese of Salzburg and in other parts*".)

priest himself and two others, who refused to recant, were burned alive on the Frohnhof at Salzburg. Five more, who confessed their errors, were executed with the sword. A woman and "a beautiful young girl" of sixteen would not recant and were drowned by the hangman in the horsepond, their bodies being afterwards burned. On the Monday after All Saints' Day a nobleman and a walletmaker, both of Salzburg, were first beheaded and then burned. Shortly afterwards a girtle-maker and a shoe-latchet maker, who refused to recant, were burned in the public square. "They lived long," says this little chronicle, "and cried so unceasingly to God that it was pitiful to hear." On the following Monday, ten women and some men, who had recanted, had their lives spared on condition of doing penance, but were expelled the town. The same week one of the town-clerks, an ex-priest, and three other persons, amongst them another journeyman girtle-maker, who under torture steadfastly refused to recant, were shut up in a house previously used for the sect's meetings, which was then set on fire. "They lived long, and pitifully shrieked together, till at last they gave up the ghost." Two other houses

used presumably for the meetings of the sect were also burned to the ground as a warning. The author states there were at the time of writing forty-one persons imprisoned in Salzburg of whom, he says, "no man knoweth what shall be done unto them."

The tract concludes with an enumeration of sundry tenets held by the new sectaries, which had been rejected by the assembled clergy of Augsburg as antichristian, amongst others, that no one is to be regarded as a right preacher who does not travel from place to place; that Christ is only the teacher of a Christian life, but not the fulfiller of the law in us; that the only way to the Father is to do justly; that adult baptism has been enjoined by a new dispensation from God.

During the five years from 1525 to 1530, the number of Anabaptists slain in the Tyrol and the neighbouring territories is estimated by Kirschmeyer at a thousand. Sebastian Franck reckons six hundred as having perished at Ensisheim, the seat of the Austrian Government in its south-western dominions, though whether he includes as Anabaptists those who suffered for their part in the Peasant revolt is not quite

clear. At Linz there were seventy-six killed in six weeks. Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria gave the order that all those who recanted should be beheaded, whilst those who did not should be burned. From 1529 onwards, the authorities were in some cases somewhat more merciful, basing their action on an Imperial mandate of April 23rd of that year, that only the leaders and preachers among the Baptists and those who were specially obstinate, or who had relapsed after having once recanted, should be burned, but that those who confessed their errors might be pardoned. Even with this limitation enough victims were delivered over to the executioner, one would have thought, to satisfy the most blood-thirsty bigot or representative of dominant class-interest.

The so-called Evangelical territories, Zwinglian and Lutheran, though persecution in them was not, as a rule, carried to the same length as in the Catholic districts, had no lack of victims. The hesitancy and partial tolerance that marked their attitude in the earlier stages of the movement soon gave way to imprisonment and executions. Instances of toleration were rare, the chief one being that of the Landgraf of

Hesse, who, in replying to a Lutheran admonition from Saxony, urging suppression of the Anabaptists, declared that his conscience would not allow him to punish religious opinion with the sword; were it not so, he would have to suppress Jews and Papists no less than the Anabaptists. In most of the Protestant territories, however, the wave of persecution rapidly rose higher and higher. Felix Manz was judicially drowned at Zürich on January 5th, 1527. On May 21st of the same year Michel Sattler, a well-known local leader at Rothenburg on the Neckar, had his tongue torn out, and after being flayed with red hot pincers was burned, his wife being punished by drowning shortly after. In Augsburg a bitter persecution began in the autumn of 1527. It was here that Hans Hut, imprisoned in one of the towers of the town wall, was killed in attempting to escape. His corpse was burned in the public place of execution. This happened in December. Among the earlier Anabaptists Hans Hut (not to be confounded with Jakob Huter) is such a prominent figure that it is worth while to turn aside to consider his career, characteristic as it in many ways was.

In a former chapter we have stated that Hut

was a native of Hain in Franconia. By trade he was a bookbinder, who travelled much through the Franconian cities. He alleged, in a statement made at Augsburg before his accusers, that he had for some time acted as a kind of agent for the Lutheran press at Wittenberg. In 1524, however, he made the acquaintance of Thomas Münzer, whom he also assisted in the printing and circulating of his pamphlets. Münzer soon won him over to some at least of his ideas. During a journey to Wittenberg, getting into conversation with some Anabaptists, he became much struck with their arguments, which he followed up by a diligent study of the passages in the New Testament relating to baptism. The result was Hut's complete conversion to the new doctrines. On the outbreak of the Peasants War in Saxony he migrated to Frankenhausen, with the object of selling his books and pamphlets to the peasants. He was, however, arrested by the authorities, but was released through the agency of Münzer, then at the height of his power. After the battle of Frankenhausen he succeeded in escaping from the pursuers and began his career as an Anabaptist preacher. Hans Hut declared that

although valuing the teaching of Münzer and revering his personality, he never actually joined his immediate followers at Mülhausen, who, as a sect, kept themselves separate from the rising Anabaptist body. Hut, however, does not appear himself to have been re-baptized before the 20th of May, 1526, when the ceremony was performed by Johannes Denck. Hence, during the Münzer period he had clearly not actually joined the body. Hut now went about himself baptizing, his chief proselyte being Wolfgang Vogel, a pastor of Elterdorf, who in his turn preached and baptized much. His assent, however, to the non-resistance doctrines, at this time held by the vast majority of the Anabaptists, seems to have been, if recognised at all, considerably modified by Münzerite teaching. The gist of his preaching was that Christ would shortly come into his earthly Kingdom, and would give the sword of justice into the hands of the elect, that is, the re-baptized ones. He is also credited with a free-love doctrine.

Arrested by order of the City authorities of Nürnberg, Hut was after a short time released and expelled the city territory. The *Rath* of Nürnberg meanwhile sent warning to Augsburg

and Regensburg against the dangerous firebrand. The latter, however, continued to preach, proclaiming himself a prophet sent by God to warn the godless of the approaching end of the world, when judgment would be held on the great ones of the earth for the abuse of their temporal authority in the persecution of the saints, no less than on priests and pastors for their false doctrines. But the saints would rejoice, for they should receive a two-edged sword, to the end that they might bind the Kings and nobles with iron chains. The great day would be presaged by the irruption of the Turks into Christendom. The advent of Christ was fixed by Hut for Whitsuntide 1528. On Hut's beginning to preach these doctrines in Nikolsburg in Moravia, where Hubmeyer had fixed the scene of his activity, the two men naturally came into collision. Hubmeyer was nothing if not a partisan of the moderate views of the party, and generally represented the most conservative tendencies in Anabaptism. The usual disputation was held between the two preachers in a village church outside Nikolsburg, and a second in Nikolsburg itself. But the doctrine of non-resistance had two sides to it. If it discountenanced

rebellion against constituted authorities, it also discountenanced fighting on behalf of those authorities or indeed in any way assisting them in their acts of violence. Now Hubmeyer, with a weakness that was characteristic of him, as is indicated not merely in his recantation at Zürich, but in his whole career, was inclined to temporize in this matter with the laws of the land, which obliged the inhabitants to pay a war-tax and provide war-material against the Turks. In this way he incurred the displeasure of the more logically-minded of the body, to whom Hans Hut rallied. It was not long before Hut was arrested and incarcerated in the castle of Nikolsburg. This time, however, friendly aid was successful in letting him down through the window by night in a net used for entrapping hares. These discussions between Hubmeyer and Hut in Moravia created a widespread sensation.

In August, 1527, Hut returned for the last time to Augsburg, where, in the following November, he was arrested, and where, as we have seen, his attempt to escape had a fatal ending. His disciple, Wolfgang Vogel, it should be said, had been already beheaded in Nürnberg, as a ringleader of rebels, on the 26th of March, 1527.

Hubmeyer himself was arrested at the instance of the Archduke Ferdinand at the beginning of 1528. He was, with eighteen other Anabaptists, in February 1528 brought to Passau and thence to Vienna where he was put to the torture. This time, though no promise of any formal recantation could be extracted from him, still weak, he sent in a defence in which he endeavoured to show himself in as orthodox a light as possible, and by which he evidently hoped to conciliate the authorities. But it was all of no avail. He was condemned to be burned at the stake. Early in March he was brought to Vienna, after being confined for some time in a castle outside the city. He was taken before the Spiritual Court, and was subjected to the torture, but, no further recantation being extorted, sentence was passed. On March 10th, he was placed bound upon a cart and carried through the streets of Vienna, being, as one report states, gripped with hot pincers at intervals till he reached the place of execution.

What followed is given in a report of the matter by one Fabri a priest, published immediately afterwards. It seems to have been a kind of official document. Hubmeyer, we are

told, who throughout his journey had been repeating passages from the Bible, on being bound to the stake raised his voice and cried in the Swiss dialect: "Oh merciful God! give me patience in my great agony." Turning to the crowd which had followed, he spoke: "Oh dear brethren, if I have offended anyone in word or deed, may he forgive me for the sake of my most merciful God, as I forgive also those who have injured me." On his clothes being taken from him, he exclaimed: "I willingly part with my garments, O my Lord! Only preserve for me my spirit and my soul which I commend to thee." After having repeated in Latin the words "O Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit," his hands and feet were bound and he was laid upon the pile. When the executioner rubbed gunpowder into his long beard, he murmured, "O salt me well, salt me well," and then raising his head, exclaimed: "O dear brethren, pray God to give me patience in this my suffering." As his hair and beard burned, he cried out: "O Jesus! Jesus!" These were his last words, before, overpowered by the smoke, his head fell upon his breast and he died. It is said that to those around it seemed as though he experienc-

d more joy than pain. The weakness and inconstancy that during his life had more than once led him, in the presence of danger, to recant or tone down his opinions, was exchanged in his last hour for the most heroic fortitude. His wife, it is said, the daughter of a citizen of Waldshut, strengthened him in his convictions with her encouragement up to the last. She herself was three days later thrown from the Danube bridge with a stone tied round her neck and drowned.

Hubmeyer's death created a great impression, but the Archduke Ferdinand was by no means disposed to stop at half measures, or at the mere extermination of the leaders. He immediately took steps of a still more drastic nature in that great seat of Anabaptism, the scene of the activity of Hubmeyer, Moravia. Shortly after Hubmeyer's death, he got a measure sanctioned by the assembled estates of that territory for the rooting out of the Anabaptist communities throughout all its districts. After this they were to be treated as common criminals, to shelter whom was in itself a crime. Large numbers fled the country into Lower Austria, Switzerland, Tyrol, Bavaria and Würtemburg. But they were destined to find no rest for the soles of their

feet. Orders were sent to the provincial Governor of Lower Austria with strict injunctions to suppress the sectaries. The following indications as to how they might be known were also forwarded:—When an Anabaptist meets another, it was said, he seizes his hat or his beard and exclaims: "God be with thee, brother in the Lord," to which is replied: "God thank thee in the Lord;" they profess the doctrine that no authority besides God should be tolerated, and that all goods should be in common; they declare, it was also alleged, that if the Turks come into the land, they will join them and not help their authorities, for that all who were not of their faith, including the Emperor, ought to be killed. It is needless to say that the Archduke and his advisers in this document only show their complete ignorance as to the tenets and dispositions of the great bulk of the Anabaptists of that time. The Moravian communities especially, having come under the influence of Hubmeyer, belonged to the most moderate section of the body. Large numbers of men, women and children, of course, fell victims. Speaking of the orders of Ferdinand, the "*Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäuffer*," (C. 58,) says: "He, by means

of his agents, did bring many into prison; and whom he found in the streets or in the fields, them had he beheaded, and they who in the villages would not betray their faith were hanged to the gate-posts."

But Leonhard of Lichtenstein, the territorial magnate who had yielded to pressure in the surrender of Hubmeyer and his associates, and in the subsequent expulsion of the Anabaptists generally, seems before long to have repented of his departure from the policy of toleration which had previously characterized him, and, in conjunction with his brother, Hans von Lichtenstein, now allowed the fugitives to return. Many of them had hidden themselves in the neighbouring forests and mountains. So the lords of Nikolsburg, the Lichtensteins, while threatening the Austrian Provost with armed resistance, should he enter their territory, sent messengers to seek out these wanderers, and to invite them to come back to their houses and homes on the assurance that nothing further should await them. Other fugitives had sought refuge in Hungary. Attracted by the reputation for toleration of the house of Lichtenstein, their Moravian territories again became a centre to which

the German Anabaptists flocked, notwithstanding the efforts of the Archduke Ferdinand to keep alive the persecution there. Several places throughout the Moravian Margravate became new centres of the Baptist communities. We read, it is true, of persecution in some districts, but, on the other hand, they succeeded in maintaining themselves in Austerlitz, Anspitz, Ausspitz and Kronau, in addition to Nikolsburg.

Meanwhile the attention of the Austrian authorities was, for the time being, partially diverted from the Anabaptist hunt by the imminence of the Turkish invasion. Others were found to take the place of the lost leaders, Hubmeyer and Hut, but no sooner were the Brethren vouchsafed temporary respite from persecution than the old opposition between the two tendencies broke out afresh. Should the Brethren fulfil their obligations as subjects in succouring their lords and masters in their resistance to the Turks, or should they rigidly maintain an attitude of passive non-resistance? Was it lawful to pay taxes? Was community of goods essential to Christian brotherhood? These were questions acrimoniously debated between the opportunists and the thorough-going section.

At last it became evident that Nikolsburg would not hold the two sides any longer. The dissension could only be put an end to by separation. Accordingly, the "men of the common life" or "men of the staff" ("*Stäbler*"), so-called because they said that no Christian ought to carry a sword or any other weapon, decided to shake the dust off their feet and depart from their opponents, the "men of the sword," as they termed them. The territorial lord, Leonhard of Lichtenstein, although, in his character of magnate and ruler, favouring the latter, as partizans of concessions to the powers of this world, nevertheless seems to have used his utmost endeavours to affect a reconciliation between the two parties. On the "men of the staff" proving obdurate, however, Leonhard issued an order that left them no alternative but to quit his domains. No sooner had they gone than Leonhard regretted having driven out a number of peaceable and industrious subjects, so hurriedly riding after them, accompanied by a small party of horsemen, he came up with them at a place called Bogenitz. He asked them why they were leaving Nikolsburg. Their conscience and heart, they said, witnessed against

his preachers; they even disapproved of his having resisted the Austrian Provost on their behalf, for, said they, the latter had been sent against them by those having authority, and to resist the powers that be was to resist the ordinance of God. Leonhard seems to have been struck with admiration at their unshakeable constancy, for finding that he could not persuade them, he accompanied them a stage further on their way, and having treated them to meat and drink, took his leave.

Their ultimate goal was Austerlitz, where the territorial lords, the brothers Von Kaunitz, were known to be friendly to the new doctrines. The messengers they sent in advance to beg for an asylum were warmly received, the brothers Von Kaunitz sending three large waggons to facilitate the advance of their main body, at the same time assigning to them a temporary resting-place, pending the erection of their houses on the Oats-market (*Hafenmarkt*), for which houses they were presented with the necessary land and timber. But here new disputes arose. Sebastian Franck relates that they had in Austerlitz overseers for the whole community and one common dish from which each

took what he had need of: but he goes on to state that the strictest discipline in matters of faith was enforced, and excommunication was frequent. "There was as much liberty of conscience among them," he says, "as among the Papists. He who will not say them yea in all things, for him hath God stopped the ears, and be he not willing to turn back they cast him out." Similar dissensions, various in kind, occurred in the other Moravian centres. One tendency would succeed in making itself paramount in Ausspitz, for example, and another in Rossitz.

Altogether the Anabaptist communities seem to have been approaching a condition of internal disintegration, when a leader appeared, who succeeded in restoring something like order. The leader was Jakob Huter, a preacher hailing from the Tyrol, who was sent to Austerlitz with a colleague in the autumn of 1529 to report on the situation. Huter, on returning to the Tyrol, organised a series of missionary companies whom he sent out into Moravia. They found everywhere disputes and jealousy rife. It was alleged that the elders took more than their share in the good things of the community. Reublin, the

spokesman of the malcontents, *(quoted in Cornelius Vol. II, pp. 252—259, note, letter to Pilgram Maarbeck)* alleges various grievances of administration as well as of doctrine. In the catalogue that he sets forth we find, for example, "maids are compelled to enter into wedlock with young men without their knowledge or consent, and are sought to be held thereto. Moreover, young children are injured by being given hard food, without milk, the issue of this treatment being such that more than twenty have perished." The writer adds: "it were enough to make a stone pity them." Some who had paid fifty gulden into the common fund had to see their own children suffering hunger. As a result, Reublin and his followers migrated from Austerlitz to Ausspitz, where the Abbess of the Convent in whose territory the town lay offered them asylum. Reublin himself, however, seems to have fallen under suspicion of similar practices to those with which he charged the Austerlitzers.

At this juncture Huter was definitely called in as arbitrator, and was finally driven from Tyrol by the persecution which was there started. This was in the late summer of 1533, more than

two years and a half after the split in Austerlitz. He was received in Ausspitz in a friendly manner. Financially, the community seems to have been in a bad way; so much so, indeed, that they required the material assistance of Huter and his Tyrollers to enable them to pay their rent-dues to the Convent on whose lands they dwelt. Reproaches, with unpleasant references to Ananias, were bandied about amongst the Brethren. The situation, however, in Tyrol had the effect of steadily augmenting the number of immigrants into Moravia. But the Austrian authorities began to take steps for cutting off this last retreat of the Brethren.

The new persecution was occasioned by the events occurring at this time in Westphalia. In vain the Moravian Anabaptists with perfect truth disclaimed all connection with the Münster movement. Anabaptism, let it take never so passive or non-resistant a form, became now suspect to the governing classes everywhere. The assembly of the Moravian estates, in a sitting held on the first Sunday in Lent, 1534, decreed that "the Anabaptists shall henceforth no longer be borne within the land, but shall be driven out." The shortest possible respite was given

them. They were to leave the land by St. George's Day, and find their bread elsewhere. Accordingly, large numbers, in spite of prohibitions, went back to the territories whence they came. Jakob Huter himself, with many of his countrymen, returned into Tyrol. But his work in Ausspitz had not been in vain, notwithstanding the confusion and discord that reigned there. He had succeeded in gaining over a large number of the Brethren to submit to the *régime* which he established, and which was termed the "Hurtercher Ordnung" or *régime* of Huter. By this time, in fact, he had become recognised as the head of the movement in both Moravia and Tyrol. But shortly after his return he was arrested in accordance with the Imperial mandate. His trial and execution followed. But we are anticipating.

The movement in Tyrol began early in the history of Anabaptism, and was recruited by more than one strong wave of immigration from the other Austrian territories, where the Imperial edicts were more rigorously carried into effect. This was the case in the autumn of 1527, when many arrived from Lower Austria, also in the early spring of 1528, when they came from the

domains of the Archbishop of Salzburg, because of the persecution, already referred to, in that district. In consequence, orders were sent to all the principal places throughout Tyrolese territory, to all the local magistrates, enjoining them not to tolerate the pernicious error, while, in order that no one might excuse himself by pleading ignorance of the mandates, it was ordered that they should be read in churches on every third Sunday. Still the sect continued to exist, holding meetings at night in secret places.

The persecution at this time (1528—1529) raged well-nigh everywhere throughout southern Germany and Austria. The Swabian League instituted flying columns for the purpose of hunting down Anabaptists, with instructions to shoot them on the spot as outlaws. Blaurock, the protagonist of re-baptism, was burned at Klausen in the Tyrol in 1529.

Up to the autumn of 1527, besides Nikolsburg, Augsburg had gradually become, owing to its political security for the time being, one of the chief seats of the movement. Among the Brethren at Augsburg were many well-to-do citizens. These naturally belonged to what may be termed the

"moderate party"—that is the party whose tendencies, whilst they adhered to the purely theological side of the movement, were to follow their personal and class interests in the material affairs of life. Hence they looked with little favour on the communism of the Zürich Brethren, and still less on the new and politically subversive tendencies that had been sought to be introduced into the Anabaptist communities by certain of the ex-followers of Münzer, notably by Hans Hut. The two first synods of the Anabaptists were held at Augsburg; one in the spring of 1526, and the other in August of the following year, just before the outbreak of the persecution. The latter synod was attended by more than sixty delegates from all the German-speaking countries. Considerable divergencies of opinion in the communities, divergencies falling under the heads of moderate or extreme respectively, were there represented.

Amongst the leaders of the party in Augsburg, where he successfully agitated for a time, was Hans Denck. It was he, in fact, who, by his eloquence and the influence of his personality, raised the Augsburg community to the important place it attained in the movement. Denck was

a learned theologian, whose salient doctrine was that of the inner light and inner word rendering sacraments and scriptures superfluous to the true believer. His sympathy with the economical and political side of the movement was not great, and he had broken many a lance with Hans Hut on these points. Denck subsequently went to Basel, where he modified his views, apparently under the influence of Oecolampadius, and where late in the year 1527 he died of the plague.

But neither persecution nor the loss of leaders seriously affected the progress of the movement. It continued to grow even where to all outward appearance it had been stamped out. Up to this time, that is, from its origin to about 1530, Anabaptism had been predominantly theological, or at least non-political. The doctrine of passive non-resistance was itself purely a deduction from a theological position. It was professedly accepted by almost all the Anabaptist communities, at any rate so far as the discountenancing of rebellion against the temporal authority was concerned. The thoroughgoing spirits insisted on its logical carrying-out in the refusal to assist, even by the payment of taxes, the powers that were, in any coercive or warlike enterprise.

The community of goods, based on similar theological grounds, was indeed a sacred principle with many congregations of the Brethren, although not with all; but in no case, in the bodies founded during the earlier years of the movement, do we find evidences of any general sympathy with the Münzerite political idea of the sword of sharpness being wielded by the elect against the unbelieving world. Hans Hut's success at Nikolsburg, and probably at Augsburg also, was due to his championing the cause of the logical non-resistants against the more moderate temporisers. Yet, in spite of his fervent enunciation of them, it would not seem that he succeeded in acquiring any following worth mentioning for his political-revolutionary theories.

Sufficient has been said to show the general character of the movement, theoretical and practical, and its fortunes during these years. To weary the reader by multiplying the names of obscure leaders or the details of the persecutions endured would be purposeless. It is enough to say that the non-political tendencies present in these earlier communities continued to maintain themselves in many cases, as, for in

stance, in Moravia, after a new and more aggressive spirit had seized what may henceforward be described as the main movement, a movement that, in the beginning of the fourth decade of the century, constituted itself along the valley of the Rhine and its adjacent districts. The rise, progress, and culmination of this movement we shall now have to consider.

# CHAPTER IV.

## MELCHIOR HOFFMANN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT.

We have seen that in central and south-eastern Germany Anabaptists continued to maintain, barring isolated individuals here and there, the attitude of non-resistance and the voluntariness of association that characterized it from the first. The fearful waves of persecution which successively swept over it succeeded at length in partially checking its progress. The only sections of this part of the Empire in which it succeeded in retaining any sort of effective organization was in the Moravian territories, where the reforms and discipline originated by Jacob Huter, were continued and developed by his successors. Here the Anabaptist doctrines in their earlier form continued to flourish in spite of attempts to stamp them out by persecution. The Moravian communities, owing to their comparative immunity from persecution, and still

more to their better internal organization, continued to send out apostles to other parts of Germany. On the other hand, their existence had more effect in destroying the power of Anabaptism in other parts of the Empire than their missionary zeal had in extending its sphere of influence. There was a continuous drain of stalwarts in the faith from other parts of Germany to Moravia. These came singly and in companies from all the districts of central, southern, and eastern Germany. The organization became more closely knit together, whilst the concentration of industrious peasants and handicraftsmen in the communities settled in these regions had the inevitable result of raising them to a condition of material prosperity that made them the envy of their neighbours. Of this, however, we shall speak more at length in a later chapter.

Meanwhile a movement had sprung up in western and northern Germany, following the course of the Rhine Valley, that effectually threw the older movement of southern and eastern Germany into the background. These earlier movements remained essentially religious and theological, owing, as Cornelius points out (Vol. II. p. 74), to the fact that they came immedi-

ately after the overthrow of the great political movement of 1525. But although the older Anabaptism did not itself take political shape, it succeeded in keeping alive the tendencies and the enthusiasm out of which, under favourable circumstances, a political movement inevitably grows. The result was, as Cornelius further observes, an agitation of such a sweeping character that the fourth decade of the sixteenth century seemed destined to realise the ideals which the third decade had striven for in vain.

The new direction in Anabaptism began in the rich and powerful Imperial city of Strasburg, where peculiar circumstances afforded the Brethren a considerable measure of toleration. Strasburg stood, ecclesiastically, at the head of the Zwinglian party in the Empire. In this way Strasburg had special connections with most other parts of Germany. At the head of the Strasburg theologians stood Martin Butzer and Wolfgang Kapitan, Kaspar Hedian and Matthias Sell. Although closely united with the Churches of northern Switzerland, Strasburg differed from other towns that had also adopted reformed doctrines, in that it had no all-powerful personality within its walls ready to give the signal for

the official reformation to close its ranks definitively against those holding extreme doctrines. There were not wanting preachers who urged such a course, but the City Council maintained an independent attitude and declined to give them ear when they suggested that the secular arm should step in and punish opinion. The ecclesiastical leaders themselves, moreover, although generally adopting the Zwinglian position, maintained a certain independence of attitude, and were, as a rule, averse to theological wrangling when this took the form of irreconcilable polemic.

It was in the year 1526 that the Anabaptist preachers first appeared in Strasburg. Towards the end of the same year Denck and Hätzer arrived and energetically carried on the new propaganda. The usual disputations followed, and, although no severe measures were taken, there were not wanting some fines and expulsions, but so mild was the *régime* of the authorities that many even of those expelled returned unmolested in a few weeks. Only once, during the sitting of the Reichstag of Speyer in 1529, did the *Rath* allow itself to be drawn into a harsher view of the case, some of the sectaries

being imprisoned and a few even put to the torture. Among these was Reublin, who on his release from prison was expelled the town and threatened with drowning should he come back. But the *Rath* before long returned to its old course of impartial toleration. After Reublin's expulsion Pilgram Maarbeck became the leader of the movement.

The semi-official heads of the Strasburg reformation were by no means at one among themselves as to doctrine, some of them even approaching Hans Denck's views on theological questions, notably on those of infant baptism, of the near approach of the millennium, or the end of the world, although it is true they at the same time repudiated re-baptism, voluntary communism, and other tenets of the sect. Kapitan especially went great lengths in this direction. The want of a strong personality, the want of unity of purpose in such leaders as these, gave the official reformation in Strasburg a permanent stamp of weakness. Under these circumstances Anabaptism naturally grew to a point at which it rivalled the former in influence. But up to this time the movement had nevertheless been conducted on the old theological lines.

The man who gave the impulse in the new direction was Melchior Hoffmann, by trade a skinner, from the Imperial city of Schwäbisch-Hall. Carried away, first by the general Reformation ferment, and afterwards by the Anabaptist agitation, early devoting himself to preaching, he consistently refused all material recompense for his labours, basing his practice on that of the Apostles. The speciality of Hoffmann's preaching would seem to have been from the first the strong emphasis with which he dwelt on the signs of the approaching end of the world. A man of little education, but of strong imagination, his reading of the Bible afforded him material for the construction of original and glowing pictures of the "last things" and the reign of the saints. In these he seemed to voice the half-conscious thoughts and imaginings of countless numbers among the humbler folk in that age of newly-awakened Bible-reading, and of social change that presented itself to the mind in the theological garb then forming part of the average man's intellectual constitution.

Hoffmann had travelled much, especially in northern Germany, and had even visited Sweden, having been for a time preacher to the German

colony in Stockholm. He had been at an earlier period of his career a companion of Karlstadt. Returning from northern Germany, he arrived in Strasburg probably in the early summer of 1529. He does not appear to have joined the Anabaptist body long before this, if at all. A year previously we find him still standing in relation with Luther, who writes concerning him that "he means well, but is rash and allows himself to be carried away." On the other hand, Hätzer, soon after his arrival in Strasburg, writes to Zwingli praising him as an able combatant for the Zwinglian doctrine in Zeeland, Sweden, Denmark and Holstein. Before long, however, Hoffmann came out in his Anabaptist colours. It was most probably in Strasburg that he was re-baptized and formally joined the sect. Henceforward he regarded himself and was regarded by his followers as a specially ordained prophet to console the elect and call the unregenerate world to repentance. Yet, notwithstanding Melchior's ecstatic visions and theories respecting the millennium and the last judgment, he did not at first actively oppose himself to the non-resistance doctrine till then general among the Brethren.

An interesting question arises as to the identity of Melchior Hoffmann with Melchior Rink, alluded to in a previous chapter. For the identity, may be urged the fact that both Melchiors are described as skinners, both are said to have been natives of Schwäbisch-Hall, while Johann van Leyden in his statement before his judges alleges that Hoffmann had also gone under the name of Rink. Moreover, we repeatedly find the two names mentioned as working at the same time and place. On the other hand, the latter circumstance does not always tally, as Rink is spoken of as at Marburg in August 1529, at the time that Hoffmann was supposed to be in Kiel. This circumstance has induced Dr. Ludwig Keller ("*Geschichte der Wiedertäuffer*," p. 128) to conclude that Rink was a separate person. "There remains at present nothing for it," he says, "but to assume that Rink and Hoffmann were two persons, who in the year 1530 laboured in common for the cause of Anabaptism." The close resemblance of the view as well as of the movements of the two men (if such we may suppose them to have been) is in any case curious. Rink, like Hoffmann, was a great partisan of the theory of inward illumination and pro-

phecies. They are both reported to have taught that Christ "was not born of the flesh of the Virgin Mary." The mildness and magnanimity of Rink's character is admitted even by hostile witnesses. Hoffmann does not seem to have remained long in Strasburg after his re-baptism, but to have gone north again. He is reported as working in company with Rink in the late autumn of 1529 at Emden in Friesland, but the success of the cause in that place appears to have been more attributed to Rink than to Hoffmann,—at least, the name of Rink is the more prominent. Among the converts here made was one Johann Volkert, who shortly after went to Amsterdam, where he founded a community that became the centre of an Anabaptist movement throughout the Netherlands. This part of the history of Anabaptism, owing to the secrecy with which the propaganda and organization was surrounded, remains obscure; what is known on the subject being almost entirely taken from the confessions of Brethren when on their trial and under torture. From these we learn of congregations founded at Liège, Maestricht and Aachen. These had their own judges to decide disputes among members of the body, and

contemptuously refused to recognise the authority of "the godless" as they termed the temporal powers. In spite of persecutions here as elsewhere, the sect spread rapidly after the year 1530 in Friesland, Holland, the Austrian Netherlands, and generally along the valley of the Rhine. We find Hoffmann in the year 1531 ministering to the brethren at Amsterdam. It is conjectured that he shortly afterwards visited Münster. In any case the new movement in the north made rapid strides. There is little doubt that at this time, if not from the beginning, it had come entirely under the influence of Hoffmann.

Some time after his reception into the Anabaptist body at Strasburg, Hoffmann, while in most other points accepting the prevalent doctrines of the Brethren, broke entirely loose from the doctrine of non-resistance, maintaining, in theory at least, the right of the elect to employ the sword against the worldly authorities, "the godless," the "enemies of the saints." It was predicted, he maintained, that a two-edged sword should be given into the hands of the saints to destroy the mystery of iniquity, the existing principalities and powers, and the time was now at hand when this prophecy should be fulfilled.

The new movement in the north-west, in the lower Rhenish districts, and the adjacent Westphalia, sprang up and extended itself, therefore, under the domination of this idea of the reign of the saints in the approaching millennium and of the notion that passive non-resistance, whilst for the time being a duty, only remained so until the coming of the Lord should give the signal for the saints to rise and join in the destruction of the Kingdoms of this world and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Hoffmann's whole learning seems to have been limited to the Bible, but this he knew from cover to cover. It is difficult at this time to conceive the enthusiasm with which all, but especially the poorer classes, provided they could read at all, threw themselves into Bible-reading. The appearance of the Lutheran translation produced a revolution. The handicraftsman on his bench and the peasant in his field would have their Bibles, over which they pored. Whole books would be learned by heart. For the common man there was no other reading save the Bible and popular theological tracts or pamphlets commenting thereon or treating current

social questions in the light of Biblical story and teaching. The followers of the new movement in question acquired the name of Melchiorites. Hoffmann now published a book explanatory of his ideas, called "*The Ordinance of God*," which had an enormous popularity. It was followed up by other writings amplifying and defending the main thesis it contained.

The Melchiorite communities of the north-west, for the rest, were similar in character to the Anabaptist communities of southern and south-eastern Germany. Whoever joined the Brotherhood vowed to live conformedly to the will of Christ, to abjure the world and its ways, and to regard his fellow-believers as brothers and sisters. He promised to deem his worldly goods as a trust held for the Brethren, to give all his superfluity to the poor, and to adopt a modest and simple costume. The Bible was read and commented on, and the ceremony of bread-breaking assiduously observed. Outwardly these communities seemed to have the same peaceable character as those of south Germany and Moravia, and in fact the notion of vengeance ultimately to to be effected by the sword appears at first to have been left very much in abeyance. The carrying

of weapons was discouraged, and the returning of good for evil was inculcated. It was ominous, however, that Melchior Hoffmann was acclaimed as the prophet Elijah returned according to promise.

Up to 1533, Strasburg continued to be regarded as the chief seat of Anabaptism, so far at least as the movement along the Rhine and the adjacent countries was concerned. The new doctrines continued to be energetically and openly preached and their following numerous. Melchior himself regarded Strasburg as the new Jerusalem from which the saints should march out to proclaim the new Kingdom. After his propagandist journey in the north he accordingly returned to Strasburg, where his passionate oratory stirred the handicraftsmen and town-proletariat to its depths. He proclaimed the end of the year 1533 as the date that would see the coming of the Lord, and the inauguration of the reign of the saints. The excitement among the poorer sections of the town population consequent on Hoffmann's preaching grew so intense that a popular rising was feared. The prophet himself was in consequence arrested and imprisoned in one of the towers on the

city wall. Crowds, however, assembled on the other side of the moat, so that they might perchance catch a glimpse of their leader, when lo! he appeared at the grated window and from thence succeeded in throwing his voice across the moat to repeat his warnings and prophecies. All the Apocalyptic plagues, said he, had been fulfilled, save the vengeance of the Seventh Angel, Babylon was falling and they were on the threshold of the new kingdom of righteousness and peace.

When Hoffmann returned from the north-west to Strasburg a large number of his disciples followed him in the belief that Strasburg was to be the home of the saints, the New Jerusalem, whence they were to go forth, conquering and to conquer, and in truth at this time the great Imperial city swarmed with the Anabaptist faithful. But Hoffmann's confidence in a speedy release from his confinement was not realised. It must not be supposed that the Melchiorite party embraced the whole of the Anabaptist body in Strasburg, as it may be said to have done in the lower Rhenish districts. There was a considerable opposition party among the Strasburg Brethren. In the end, however, Hoff-

mann's party triumphed, as much from the effect of his startling successes in the Netherlands, and the north-west generally, as from the arguments of his supporters, or the force of his own eloquence.

Towards the close of 1533, in spite of the Melchiorite agitation and of the visions and prophecies of the Melchiorite prophets and prophetesses, so zealously interpreted by the new Elias, the Anabaptists, numerous as they were, shewed no signs of acquiring the mastery of the city either by the force of persuasion or of overt insurrection, while at the same time the town authorities began to give unmistakable indications of using stronger measures than heretofore. It began to be whispered abroad among the Brethren that Strasburg was after all not destined to be the New Jerusalem, but that the Lord had rejected it because of its unbelief, whilst all eyes were turned to the astounding successes of the party in the north-west, and especially to the great Episcopal City of Münster in Westphalia, where events were developing with astounding rapidity, and the conviction gained ground every day on all hands that not Strasburg, but Münster was ordained

to be the seat of the future Kingdom of God. Hoffmann had prophesied on his return to Strasburg early in the year—and of the sincerity of his belief there is no reason to doubt—that he would be seized and imprisoned for six months, at the end of which time the Saviour would return to claim his inheritance and free his servants from their chains. But things turned out quite otherwise. Poor Hoffmann, who, by his enthusiasm, eloquence, and power of organization, had created the great movement in the north-west, never again recovered his liberty. He died in his dungeon ten years later. They could not keep him from writing. Deprived of paper, he found means of scratching his inspirations on the margins of the devotional books allowed him. Deprived of these, he succeeded in inscribing his thoughts on his linen.

During the Middle Ages, the Netherlands and districts of the Lower Rhine had ever been a favourable soil for heresies and quasi-heresies in which the theory of a common life and the community of goods formed an essential part. There it was that the Beghards flourished most, there the "Brethren of the Common Life" had their most prosperous communities. But by the

end of the fifteenth century, the premature economic development and political circumstances had combined to create a strong centralized Government there, which was not favourable to the success of popular movements, religious or political. The Hapsburgs, to whom the power of the extinct house of Burgundy in these countries had reverted, and who held the seventeen provinces under their centralized sway as part of the Spanish monarchy, were a strong support of the Catholic power and the Papal pretensions, which they found indispensable for their own purposes. Irregular forms of religious enthusiasm, no less than the orthodox Lutheran or Zwinglian reforming tendencies, were put down with an iron hand. But revolutionary views, though driven underground, were not altogether wanting, especially among the guilds of journeymen-weavers. Hither also the doctrines of Melchior Hoffmann were carried, though they made little overt progress, owing to the adverse political conditions.

It was not Flanders and Brabant that became the head-quarters of Anabaptism; it was to Holland, and more especially to Amsterdam that the Brethren flocked. From Amsterdam and

other Dutch towns Melchiorite missionaries went forth in all directions through the neighbouring territories, preaching the new word, proclaiming the approaching advent of Christ and his Saints to reign over the world in righteousness, to cast down the mighty from their seats and to raise up them of low degree. The principal organizer of this missionary movement was one Jan Matthys, a master-baker of Haarlem, who speedily acquired the leadership of the Anabaptist party in Holland owing to his strong personality and persuasive powers. The Brethren saw in him a new and Heaven-sent prophet to whom was delegated, by God himself, authority to confer apostleship. The doctrines of Matthys were practically identical with those of Melchior Hoffmann, with the difference that the revolutionary side with Matthys broke all bounds, and the notion of a Holy War in the literal sense was placed in the forefront of his teaching. What with Melchior was prophecy of what was about to happen became with Matthys a direct incitement to revolt as a religious duty. With him there was to be no delay. It was the duty of all the Brethren to shew their zeal by at once seizing the sword of sharpness and mowing down

the godless therewith. In this sense Matthys completed the transformation of Anabaptism begun by Hoffmann. Melchior had indeed rejected the non-resistance doctrine in its absolute form, but he does not appear in his teaching to have uniformly emphasized the point, and certainly did not urge the destruction of the godless as an immediate duty to be fulfilled without delay. With him was always the suggestion, expressed or implied, of waiting for the signal from Heaven, the coming of the Lord, before proceeding to action. With Matthys there was no need for waiting, even for a day, the time was not merely at hand, it had already come. The same causes, the dislocation of the economic conditions of mediæval life and the rise of the earlier forms of modern capitalism (described at length in "*German Society at the close of the Middle Ages*" and recapitulated in Chapter I. of "*The Peasants War*")—causes which immediately led up to the Peasant revolt, and on its bloody suppression to the rapid spread of the earlier Anabaptism with its political quietism and its despondent doctrine of non-resistance—these causes, now that the memory of the great defeat and the despair following it, had faded somewhat from

the minds of men, led to the natural man reasserting himself and to renewed hopes of his being saved in this world by his own action. Add to this that the Dutch and Low-German populations of the north-west had either not suffered at all from the results of the rebellion of 1525 or only to a very limited extent, as compared with those of southern and south-eastern Germany, and were therefore more or less virgin soil from a revolutionary point of view.

Notwithstanding some opposition at first to his new departure, Jan Matthys soon succeeded in gathering around him a number of enthusiastic disciples. If Melchior Hoffmann had been Elijah and if he were lost to them by the machinations of the godless, was not Jan Matthys Enoch, who should follow in his steps and bring his work to a conclusion? Among Matthys' most intimate followers was Jan Bockelson from Leyden. Bockelson was a handsome and striking figure. He was the illegitimate son of one Bockel, a merchant and Bürgermeister of Soevenhagen, by a peasant woman from the neighbourhood of Münster, who was in his service. After Jan's birth Bockel married the woman and bought her her freedom from the villein status

that was hers by heredity. Jan was taught the tailoring-handicraft at Leyden, but seems to have received little schooling. His natural abilities, however, were considerable, and he eagerly devoured the religious and propagandist literature of the time. Amongst other writings the pamphlets of Thomas Münzer especially fascinated him. He travelled a good deal, visiting Mechlin and working at his trade for four years in London. During this period he probably saved a little money, and returning home married the widow of a seafaring man. He now set up in trade on his own account and seems to have travelled as far as Lisbon on business affairs, but business apparently was not his vocation and he speedily became bankrupt. He then threw himself with ardour into the Anabaptist agitation, coinciding as it did with views that had always enlisted his sympathies, and, scarcely twenty-five years old, he was won over to the new propaganda of Jan Matthys.

Kerssenbroek, a courtly chronicler of the movement, alleges that Bockelson, whom he sneers at as a tailor and stage-king, had from youth displayed a certain literary faculty and had written plays which he had produced "for

money." Bockelson had nothing in him of the asceticism characteristic of so many of his Anabaptist co-religionists. Matthys was now head of the Anabaptist communities in Holland and the adjacent territories. These were more homogeneous in theory and more closely federated than those in south-eastern Germany that dated from the earlier years of the movement, and he soon managed to carry things entirely his own way.

# CHAPTER V.

## THE REFORMATION MOVEMENT IN THE EPISCOPAL TERRITORIES OF MÜNSTER.

WESTPHALIA was swept by the reformation no less than other parts of the Empire. In the towns the same political and social causes of discontent existed as elsewhere, and the same agitations were taking place. That the ferment of the time was by no means altogether the outcome of religious zeal, as subsequent historians have persisted in representing it, was recognised by the contemporary heads of the official Reformation. Thus, writing to Luther, under date August 29th, 1530, his satellite, Melancthon, has the candour to admit that the Imperial Cities "care not for religion, for their endeavour is only toward domination and freedom." As the principal town of Westphalia at this time may be reckoned the chief city of the Bishopric of Münster. This important ecclesiastical principality was held "immediately of the Empire." It had as

its neighbours Ost-Friesland, Oldenburg, the Bishopric of Osnabrück, the county of Marck, and the Duchies of Berg and Cleves. Its territory was half the size of the present province of Westphalia, and was divided into the upper and lower diocese, which were separated by the territory of Fecklenburg. The Bishop was a prince of the empire and one of the most important magnates of north-western Germany, but in ecclesiastical matters he was under the Archbishop of Köln. The diocese had been founded by Charles the Great. The ferment within the principality, and especially in the chief town Münster, which had been suppressed in the spring of 1526 by the ecclesiastical authorities, and an attempt to revive which in 1527 had failed, was fanned anew into flame by the famine and pestilence that marked the year 1529. At harvest-time in that year the frightful pestilence known as the English "sweating sickness" broke over Westphalia. "It was a violent inflammatory fever, which after a short rigour, prostrated the powers as with a blow; and amidst painful oppression at the stomach, headache, and lethargic stupor, suffused the whole body with a fœtid perspiration. All

this took place within the course of a few hours, and the crisis was always over within the space of a day or night. The internal heat that the patient suffered was intolerable, yet every refrigerant was certain death." [1] The devastation caused was frightful. In Dortmund, out of five hundred attacked in the first four days, four hundred and seventy succumbed. [2] This instance seems to fairly well represent the average high percentage of deaths to cases. The harvest itself, during which the plague began, was exceptionally bad, and this, added to the general economic changes of the time, caused a special local rise in price, such as, in the words of a contemporary, "no man had ever known before." The bushel of rye, which in the summer of 1529 had been three and a half (German) shillings, rose in less than a year to nine shillings. The harvest of 1530 was no better than that of the previous year, so that in 1531 the price of barley rose to fourteen shillings the bushel. The long threatened invasion of the Turks now seemed imminent, and throughout

[1] Hecker's "*Epidemics of the Middle Ages*," p. 181.

[2] Keller, "*Wiedertäufer*," p. 291.

the empire extraordinary Turks' taxes were imposed. These in some cases amounted to ten per cent of the total income. An Archdeacon of Dortmund, writing to his superior, states that "the misery is appalling and indescribable."

Meanwhile the authorities of Münster, who had hitherto succeeded in keeping down any revolutionary movement, were determined to stamp out all tendencies to innovation in Church or State so far as this was possible. But it was not possible in the long run. The renewed outbreak of reforming ideas was coincident with the time of calamity and scarcity above spoken of. Its occasion was the preaching of a hitherto unknown young priest at a church in the neighbourhood of Münster. Bernhardt Rothmann, for such was his name, had studied theology at the university of Deventer. He subsequently filled the post of schoolmaster, and in the year 1529 obtained the chaplaincy of the church of St. Mauritz, outside the walls of Münster. He soon seems to have acquired relations with the reforming party in the city and to have begun to preach heretical doctrines. The result was that he lost his post as chaplain for the time being. After a year and a day, however, he was allowed

to return, but his views had acquired increased strength and consistency during the interval. Henceforward (the beginning of 1531) his church became the centre of a reforming movement. On the night of Good Friday, 1531, we are told, there were disturbances in the church on the part of Rothmann's followers. Although the guildsmen and journeymen were the first to be attracted to him, it is sufficiently evident that he soon obtained influence among members of the town patriciate and even over certain of the Prince-Bishop's Councillors. He ventured openly to allege that Bishop Friedrich himself was not unfavourable to his teaching, which may possibly have been true, for it was an open question with many of the spiritual potentates of the Empire at the time, whether to take sides with the Reformation and establish their power on a purely political basis, as secular princes—as Albrecht, Duke of Prussia, had done—or to throw their influence into the opposite scale, the maintenance of the *status quo*, political and religious. Rothmann's preaching at first had the usual reformation colour. True religion consisted in faith in Christ and in the practice of brotherly love, rather than in the performance

of outward rites and ceremonies, such as fasting, confession, hearing mass, etc. These doctrines did not necessarily imply a breach with the established Catholicism, but constituted what was called the Erasmian standpoint of many within the Church.

The time, however, had now come when the more decided and energetic of the malcontents with the current Church theory and practices were forced to take their stand with one or other of the schismatic reform Churches and sects. After a journey to Wittenberg, in the spring of 1531, Rothmann returned to Münster, in July, determined to overthrow the dominant Church doctrine and organization. This becoming evident, we cannot be surprised that the church of St. Mauritz was soon found closed against him. Not to be beaten, he tried preaching in the churchyard, but the Bishop, who, whatever may have been the case before, had by this time fully made up his mind to stand by the old order of things, had his countermand ready and issued an inhibition against the daring innovator. Driven from his quarters outside the walls, Bernhardt took up his residence within the city, where he was received by his friends

with open arms. The agitation in Münster now had a religious leader and became so threatening that the Cathedral Chapter sought the intervention of the Emperor, who induced the Bishop at their instance to issue a mandate expelling the young preacher from the Münster territory. But the town authorities were either too weak or too unwilling to take the necessary steps for giving this order its effect, so Rothmann remained in Münster jealously guarded by his friends and the centre of an active party. The religious reformation in Münster now for the first time made common cause with the political discontent.

On January 23rd, 1532, Rothmann drew up his confession of faith, which the party immediately laid before the *Rath* with the prayer that it might be granted to any citizen to subscribe thereto. The response was not unfavourable, and on Sunday, February 18th, Rothmann gave his first public address to the city in the churchyard of St. Lamberti. A few days later, he was placed in possession of the church itself, and almost immediately after was appointed, by a decree of the *Rath*, first Evangelical preacher of the parish church which had been built out of municipal funds. At the same time, he was

granted one of the guild-houses as his official place of residence.

The head of the democratic-municipal movement was Bernhardt Knipperdollinck, a cloth-merchant materially well-situated and an exceptionally able speaker and leader who, in addition to several other citizens of credit and renown, forsook his class-interests for the cause of justice to the common man. It is reported that as early as 1524 Knipperdollinck made a voyage on a Dutch ship with the subsequent Anabaptist, Melchior Rink, to Sweden, and visited Stockholm. The two men led an iconoclastic attack on the churches, only stopped by the direct intervention of the Swedish King. Knipperdollinck was a disciple of Melchior Rink in the earlier years of the Reformation movement, before the rise of Anabaptism properly so-called. The lower German territories, penetrated as they were by the great highway of the Rhine and thereby in easy communication with Switzerland and southern Germany, were in a favourable geographical position for feeling the effects of every new tendency among the reforming parties. It is highly probable that before the propagandist activity of Melchior Hoffmann

and his followers, "the gospel of the common man," as Anabaptism came to be called, had already been preached in these regions by journeymen and the smaller travelling traders. In any case the population of Westphalia was well prepared for revolutionary teaching, both political and religious. The town of Münster itself, like Köln, and the other larger cities of north-west Germany, had been deeply stirred by the events of the spring and summer of 1525, whilst, as above mentioned, 1527 saw an abortive attempt to revive them under the leadership of Knipperdollinck. But although up to the time of which we now write it had been possible to smother signs of incandescence in the inflammable material that abounded within the walls, the inflammable material remained the same and only awaited an effective kindling to burst out into conflagration.

Unsatisfactory as the new turn affairs had taken in Münster at the beginning of 1532 must have been to the Bishop and his Chapter, they were powerless to do anything in the then state of public feeling in the city, partially backed, as it was at least, by the municipal authorities. About two months after the presentation to the *Rath* of Rothmann's Confession of Faith, how-

ever, Bishop Friedrich abdicated, and Münster received a new Prince-Bishop in the person of Erick of Osnabrück on the 27th of March, 1532. Erick had the reputation of favouring moderate reforming tendencies. This being the case, the "moderate" party in Münster, who under Friedrich had maintained an attitude of at least passive opposition, at once ranged themselves on the side of their new temporal and spiritual lord. In consequence, an episcopal mandate on the 17th of April, 1532, directed against Rothmann and his followers, had the effect of inducing the *Rath*, together with the heads of the Guilds, to order Rothmann to cease his preaching until further notice. This order was the occasion of the first definite breach between the moderate and the extreme parties of the city. The commands of the Municipal authorities were answered in a document, dated 28th April, in which the "common man" announced his intention of holding by his chosen preacher at all costs.

The struggle having been thus begun, it remained to be seen which side would come out victorious in the immediate issue pending. Neither the Episcopal nor the Municipal authorities possessed adequate means for giving effect

to their decrees, whilst the power of the town-democracy rose higher every day. In the meantime, on the 14th of May, Bishop Erick died, and for over a fortnight, pending the new election, the See remained vacant. The want of an over-lord proved favourable to the agitation.

On the first of June, a new Prince-Bishop was appointed in the person of Count Franz von Waldeck, formerly a Canon of Köln. His elevation and his whole career bound up his interests with his powerful Rhenish neighbours, especially with his spiritual superior the Archbishop of Köln, and these being important pillars of the Imperial and Catholic policy, it is not difficult to imagine on what side the power of Münster's new lord was engaged. On the first of July, a revolutionary committee composed of thirty-six burghers was formed for the ostensible purpose of watching events in the interests of the democracy and of the new religious tendencies. Stormy meetings of citizens followed in one of the Guild-houses, at which various demands were formulated, the chief being that all the parochial churches should be handed over to Evangelical preachers. The *Rath*, feeling its position insecure, signed an agreement on the

15th of July, conceding the democratic demands, and on the 10th of August all the churches in the gift of the municipality were solemnly handed over to the new teachers. An injunction of July 12th, under the sign-manual of the Emperor Charles V. directing Bishop Franz to expel Rothmann and proceed against other disturbers of order with the utmost rigour, did not help matters. A mandate summoning the town to order and obedience was issued without result. The influence of the knighthood of the surrounding territory, warning and threatening the town, was then brought to bear, but all without avail. The burghers declared that they would rather lose worldly goods and even life itself than consent to surrender the true worship of God. Thereupon the Prince-Bishop and his advisers resolved upon resort to force of arms. Letters were sent out to the temporal and spiritual nobles owning allegiance to the See, enjoining them to forward all available assistance without delay.

In October overt action began inside the town on the part of the Bishop's minions by the sequestration of the goods of the disaffected citizens and by indictment of the leaders of the

movement. At the same time, communication between the different quarters of the town was cut off by chains placed across the streets, and other measures. It was also attempted to isolate the town itself. The citizens now saw that war was meant, and accordingly on the 25th of October the heads of the different city-wardships appeared before the *Rath*, demanding weapons and armour, which had to be accorded them. Immediately after, bodies of the Bishop's horsemen and the surrounding knighthood appeared before the gates. Yet, notwithstanding these demonstrations, the Bishop did not venture at present to proceed to extremities. His preparations were not complete. He had neither men, arms, nor money enough. Add to this, the other smaller towns of the diocese shewed signs of beginning to grow restive. The Evangelical party was making great progress throughout the whole land. The town of Münster had, moreover, sent to Philip of Hesse, begging him to intervene. The Emperor, himself in sore straits owing to the Turkish war, had been obliged to make concessions to the Nürnberg Protestants.

Other reasons of policy combined to render

it too dangerous for the Prince-Bishop to risk at this juncture calling down upon himself the hatred, if not the overt hostility, of all the Protestant interests of North Germany. The report that reached his ears of a proposal on the part of influential citizens that the town should hand itself over to Burgundy also increased his sense of the delicacy of the situation. The result was that negotiations were entered upon, and the intervention of the Landgraf of Hesse declined. At first, the chances of an understanding being arrived at seemed not unfavourable. The Bishop on his side, on October 29th, entered into a treaty of offence and defence with Evangelical Hesse.

As the negotiations were continuing, a number of spiritual and temporal nobles who were concerned therein had taken up their abode in the little township of Telgte, within the town-territory of Münster. The burghers now bethought themselves of using this circumstance for gaining a point of vantage over the Bishop, and on Christmas night about a thousand armed citizens of the town guard marched out and occupied the little town without resistance. Thus on the morning of the 26th of December the nobles assembled

there found themselves prisoners in the hands of the people of Münster. This *coup*, however it may be judged from an ethical standpoint, was a highly politic one, since the town now possessed hostages of the first value, a fact that tied the hands of the aristocratic followers of the Bishop. It also gave Philip of Hesse a fresh opportunity of intervening, and in fact on December 29th an understanding was arrived at between Philip and Franz, in consequence of which Councillors were despatched from the court of Hesse to Münster. On the 8th of January, 1533, the new negotiations began, and Landgraf Philip promised the burghers to use his friendly offices for the formal admission of the town of Münster into the new Evangelical League of Schmalkalden. The result was that Franz and his Chapter had to give in, and by a charter, signed and sealed on February 14th, 1533, Münster was formally constituted an Evangelical town.

The other small towns of the principality, however, which had begun to follow the example of Münster, were not so fortunate, and the authorities were fairly successful in re-establishing the old order of things in them. But the

agitation continued none the less, varied with stormings of churches and the like, not alone in the towns, but even in the country districts far and wide throughout Westphalia, so that eventually here also concessions had to be made. In the neighbouring Prince-Bishopric of Minden serious disturbances had taken place as long ago as 1529 and, as in Münster, a committee of thirty-six burghers had been appointed, whose first act was to set up an escaped monk as a reformed pastor in the church of St. Simeon. It is noteworthy that in this case the revolt was confined exclusively to "the common man," the journeymen, and the town proletarians, for the guilds held steadily by the patrician *Rath*. But, this notwithstanding, with the assistance of the Evangelical Count Erich von Hoya the revolution was successful, and Minden became an Evangelical town. The wealthier religious foundations had in all cases to furnish heavy tribute to the municipal coffers, whilst in some the buildings were turned into almshouses and schools and the valuables they contained confiscated for civic use. In Herford similarly an ecclesiastical revolution had been effected. About the same time Lippstadt shewed signs of religious disaffec-

tion. In Soest, friction between the Council and the general assembly of the citizens had broken out two years before, in the summer of 1531. Here, however, the demands of the popular party were undisguisedly economic; the immunity of the clergy from taxation was to be abolished, they were to be forbidden to exercise any trade in the town, the general assembly of the citizens was to have control of the town government, and things of a like nature were claimed.

What strikes one in these revolts of the early years of the fourth decade of the century, as in those of 1525, is the almost precise similarity of procedure in all cases. One almost invariable feature of them is the establishment by the journeymen, poorer guildsmen, and town proletarians, of a committee of public safety in opposition to the patrician *Rath*, which sometimes received the support of the official guild influence, and sometimes not, but which was usually, at least for the time being, successful in seizing the lion's share of the executive power and in making the legitimate authorities subservient to its will. In most cases, the religious garb in which the movement so often clothed itself allows us plainly to see through to the

deeper-lying social discontent which constituted its real substance. (Cf. Keller, "*Wiedertäufer*," pp. 102, 113.)

Bernhardt Rothmann, although at first at least outwardly Lutheran, early showed signs of divergencies in the matter of Church organisation from the orthodox Lutheran model. After his visit to Wittenberg in 1531, he repaired to Strasburg, where he was for a long while under the influence of the Zwinglian Kapitan, and here he was converted to the Zwinglian ideas. On his return, however, he seems to have concealed his change of view until his power was established with the reforming party in Münster. It was not till the summer of 1532 that he openly broke with the Lutheran standpoint and began to play tricks with the Sacrament. One of these tricks was the use in this connection of a kind of flat cake called *Stute*, owing to which he acquired the sobriquet of "Stuten Berndt," Berndt being the shortened form of Bernhardt. He was found expressing strong opinions on the worthlessness of the ceremonial observance. His views in this respect, it soon became evident, went as far beyond the Zwinglian's as the latter went beyond the Lutheran's. He did not, however, meet

with any strong opposition in Münster itself, although the Lutherans outside began to feel uneasy, and Luther's jackal, Melancthon, wrote him an admonitory letter. The exact nature of the model intended by Rothmann for the new Münster Church organisation we do not know, but we may certainly conclude that it was mainly on Zwinglian lines.

After the treaty of peace between the town and its territorial over-lord, on the 14th of February, 1533, Münster became the centre to which religious and political malcontents flocked from all sides. At the same time, now that the opposition to the Catholic Church had been successful, the divergencies of the reform party with each other assumed, as was only natural, more importance. Differencies arose between Rothmann and the newcomers. Already in the summer of 1532 a preacher, by name Heinrich Roll, *alias* "Wassenberg," whence his disciples are known as the "Wassenberger," owing to his opinions had been driven out of the territory of Jülich and had sought refuge in Münster. Roll, or "Wassenberg," was a determined opponent of infant baptism. He was at first opposed on this point by Rothmann, although otherwise

they worked together. By May, 1533, however, he had succeeded in gaining Rothmann over to his views.

The Lutheran party, headed by the Syndicus of the town, Van der Wieck, became now seriously disturbed at the direction their leading pastor's teaching and practices were taking. They sent delegations to him, earnestly entreating him not to compromise the religious unity of the reform party by the discussion of these knotty and dangerous points of doctrine. Rothmann insisted on retaining his liberty of action. He and his partisans were next ordered to appear before the *Rath*, which summarily directed him to abstain from the promulgation of anti-Lutheran doctrines. It is reported that at the time he gave an undertaking to obey. But, however this may be, we find him a few days later denouncing infant baptism before his congregation with greater energy than ever. The head of the Münster Evangelical Church rightly thought himself strong enough to defy the Münster Council.

He and his partisans now proclaimed the thesis that in religious matters the final judgment rests with the general assembly of citizens. To

point the moral of this, one of the Wassenberger party, who had made himself particularly obnoxious to the Lutheran Council by his violent onslaughts on the practice of infant baptism, was made assistant preacher in the church of St. Lamberti itself. Doctrines akin to those of Anabaptism, relative to mutual assistance and the duty of the division of worldly substance amongst believers also found favour with the preachers of St. Lamberti. The conflict continued in a sub-acute stage throughout the summer of 1533. It was made acute by an order of the *Rath* enjoining the Reformed pastors of the town to carry out the practice of infant baptism.

The matter was brought to a definite issue on September 7th, when the children of two Lutheran Councillors were brought to the church of St. Lamberti to be christened. Staprade, the assistant preacher, refused to perform the rite. Thereupon, as it would appear, Staprade himself, as a non-burgher, was expelled the city, while Rothmann and the other anti-Lutheran clergy were cited before the Council and threatened with deposition and expulsion. The latter now, in a letter dated the 17th of September, took up the gauntlet and renounced their

allegiance to the Council, alleging that they were enjoined by Holy Writ to obey God rather than man. The *Rath* answered this move by deposing the signatories and closing their churches against them. Immense excitement seized the "common man" in consequence. So threatening did matters look indeed, that the *Rath* saw itself compelled to a measure of compromise. They consented to grant Rothmann under certain restrictions the church of Servetius. Rothmann now made himself conspicuous by a life of penitence, rigour, and zeal in works of charity, which increased his reputation as a Heaven-sent teacher day by day. Meanwhile the new theories of brotherly love, the surrender of worldly goods to poorer brethren, and the like, spread rapidly. Many well-to-do citizens literally fulfilled the injunction of selling all they had and giving to the poor, those possessing houses destroyed their rent deeds, creditors forgave their debtors what was owing them, and all who had embraced the new faith poured out their wealth in acts of charity. Rothmann now set up a printing-press in his house, from which pamphlets and broad sheets were issued and carried by various means into far

distant territories, especially into those of the north-west.

From this time forward, the authority of the *Rath* diminished daily, whilst the influx of foreign elements into the city continued unabated. On November 6th an agreement was entered into between Rothmann's party and the Council, by which the former agreed that certain of their preachers should leave the town, but that Rothmann should remain and the rank and file of his followers be unmolested. At the same time the Council took steps to import new "Evangelical" pastors after its own heart, to replace the deposed and exiled Rothmannites or Wassenbergers. The Council now seemed to be in a fair way of recovering its authority, when a sudden influx of the most fanatical and energetic of Anabaptist elements flooded the town and upset all its calculations. These were our friends the so-called Melchiorites, active partisans of Jan Matthys and his itinerant apostles. Within the last few weeks, the party of Matthys had grown to extraordinary dimensions, persecution had broken down the opposition of the non-resistants to Matthys' propaganda of the sword, whilst the other Melchiorites, who awaited a sign from

Heaven that the day was at hand, were made confident by the declarations of Matthys' missionaries, who went forth after the manner of their New Testament exemplars in pairs and assured the wavering that the sign had already come, that Enoch had already appeared to announce the great day. Enoch, it is scarcely necessary to say, was none other than Jan Matthys himself, as to whose signs and wonders the wandering prophets were eloquent. Wherever they came, new converts to Anabaptism in the sense of Jan Matthys were made. Communities, often with a numerous membership, were founded. Shepherds, or "Bishops" as they were now sometimes called, were appointed, and the apostles would pass on. The one topic of conversation along their track among the new converts, whether in the journeymen's guild-room, on the highways or in the fields, was the imminent day of retribution when the mighty should be cast down from their seats and the man of low degree should be raised up, when the godless world should be smitten with a two-edged sword and the saints should reign for ever in the new Kingdom of God about to arise on the ruins of the kingdoms of this world.

Notwithstanding the success of the moderate party in Münster in getting rid of the recalcitrant pastors and in installing good evangelical Lutherans in their stead, there was one weak place in their position, and that was the retention in the city of the head and front of the offending movement, Bernhardt Rothmann. It was only too obvious that the city Council lacked the power or the courage to remove the most dangerous enemy of the order they aimed at establishing. The followers of Rothmann, reinforced by kindred spirits in the shape of Anabaptist strangers driven by persecution on the one side and fanaticism on the other from north and south, east and west, but especially from the west and north-west, who had sought a haven of refuge in the chosen city of Münster, soon took heart of grace. Rothmann himself developed an unpleasing activity in preaching his favourite doctrines in conventicles and otherwise.

On September 8th, 1533, a journeyman smith began openly to proclaim the doctrines of Anabaptism in the churchyard of St. Lamberti. The *Rath*, stirred by this to spasmodic action and seeing plainly that behind the young smith stood

Bernhardt Rothmann, three days later plucked up courage to issue an order for expulsion against the latter, at the same time withdrawing from him the protection of the authorities, which in other words meant a sentence of outlawry. Rothmann coolly told the bailiff who brought him the decree that he stood in no need of the protection of these fathers of the city, that he was quite content to rely upon God and his disciples for all the protection he wanted. He now openly shewed his contempt for the town government by not only refusing to quit the city, but by beginning to preach again without any attempt at concealment. The answer of the authorities was the arrest, not of Rothmann himself, but of the young smith whose preaching had given rise to the *Rath*'s action. This sufficed to raise a hornet's nest. The day after the arrest, September 16th, about two o'clock in the afternoon, all the members of the smiths' Guild assembled in their guild-room, and proceeded to the town-hall (*Rathhaus*), clamorously demanding the release of their colleague. As far as one can gather, the Guild-masters, no less than the journeymen, were to the fore in this action. So threatening was the attitude of

the assembled smiths that the Council had to give way, with the result that Johann Schroeder, the imprisoned smith, after being handed over to them, was carried in triumph through the principal streets. On learning of the powerlessness of the authorities to enforce their decrees against the will of the popular party, the banished preachers ventured without further ceremony to return, and by the end of the year they were all back in the town. On New Year's Day, 1534, Roll took possession of the pulpit in one of the city churches, once more to thunder out his invectives against Luther and all his followers.

Finally, on January 5th or 6th, two of the apostles of Jan Matthys entered the town, proclaiming that God had sent a new prophet on earth to herald the end of the dispensation of this world and the beginning of the millennium. They exhorted all, as they valued their salvation, to be rebaptized. Münster, they said, was to be the new Jerusalem where the saints were to reign in unity and brotherly love, constrained by no law and no authority. God, they said, had revealed to his prophet that it was by means of the elect themselves, acting as his instruments,

that his kingdom should be established. A rage for rebaptism seized upon all, the leaders no less than the rank and file submitting to it, Rothmann and Roll amongst the rest. Having effected their object and sewn the seed, the Dutchmen, a day or two later, passed on, but their advent had lain the train of all that followed. Münster had become Anabaptist; whole sections of the population went mad with excitement, citizens and strangers, guildmasters and journeymen, even monks and nuns, were swept into the whirlpool of fanaticism.

On the 13th of the month, the young enthusiast Jan Bockelson of Leyden arrived in Münster accompanied by a colleague, proclaiming themselves apostles of God through his prophet Jan Matthys. It was not the first time that Bockelson had been in Münster, having resided there for three months the previous year, and it was on his return to Leyden later in the summer that he received the call from the prophet of Haarlem, and began to devote his life to the new propaganda. The young apostle was at this time twenty-five years of age, handsome in face and figure, and with an eloquence well-calculated to arouse enthusiasm. He soon had

all the women of the movement at his feet, and became the foremost figure. Immediately he entered into relations with the leaders of the popular party, both on the religious and the political side, becoming intimate with Rothmann and Roll, and, above all, with the well-to-do burgher and cloth-merchant, Bernhardt Knipperdollinck, whose daughter he gained in marriage. The aims of Knipperdollinck were essentially political, but the interests of the political and religious revolutionists seemed now identical. Rothmann, Roll, and the earlier leaders now fell into the background. They had, it is true, no choice being left them, to make common cause with the new movement, and to allow themselves, whether they would or not, to be carried away with it. The popular party, the poor guildsmen, the journeymen, the floating population of proletarians and strangers, soon made it evident that they meant carrying matters alike in politics, in social relations, and in religion, to their logical conclusion. Rothmann seemed to have had a presentiment of the turn things would take some months before, when he advised a friend of his, through the latter's wife, who sought his counsel, to accept an appointment

elsewhere than in Münster, "for," said he, "things will not go well here!"

From this time forward, the attempt to put the new doctrines in practice became more and more the vogue. Women played a prominent part in this new phase. Gold, costly vessels, and jewellery of all sorts were brought into the common fund. Meanwhile the immigration of outside elements continued. After a time Jan Matthys himself was summoned by Bockelson to take part in the foundation of the new millennial order of things. Matters were now plainly past the power of *Rath* or any other worldly authority, but it must not be supposed that the governing body of Münster surrendered without at least the show of a struggle. On January 8th, an attempt had been made by the Council to obtain satisfaction in the matter of the returned preachers, though nothing came of it but abortive negotiations. Serious differences now broke out within the governing body itself. A week later, however, a decree of expulsion was with some difficulty carried, and the preachers, with the exception of Rothmann himself, were conducted outside the walls by the city constables. But they were no sooner without the gate than

they were met by a body of their friends, and brought back round the rampart of the town to another gate, at which they re-entered.

The authorities now appealed to the Bishop, who on January 23rd issued a mandate enjoining them in accordance with the Imperial edicts to root out the plague of Anabaptism that had infected the town, and threatening all who favoured Anabaptist doctrines with the ban of the Empire. But this episcopal blind thunder did not alter the course of events. The agitation continued unabated. At dusk on January 28th, an attempt to seize the town was made by the revolutionary party. Armed bands appeared at several points, closing the streets with chains and committing other insurrectionary acts, but the disturbance was damped down by the leaders of the movement, who, at a meeting held in Knipperdollinck's house, decided that the moment for overt action had not arrived. On the 30th, the Council held a conference with the heads of the Guilds, the result of which was a decision to maintain personal freedom in matters of religion, but to resolutely discourage any attempts at provocation on either side.

The decisive step by which the Anabaptists proclaimed themselves in insurrection was taken on February 9th, 1534, when, at seven o'clock in the morning, five hundred armed Anabaptists suddenly seized the market-place and certain doors of the *Rathhaus*. The party of order quickly gathered together its forces. Evangelicals and Catholics stood shoulder to shoulder in the work of defending the old kingdom of this world in Münster, as represented by the Council and governing authorities, against the new kingdom of God as represented by the Anabaptist saints. All the streets and narrow lanes leading up to Ueberwasser Kirchhof were protected by ordnance. The towers of the Cathedral, the so-called "Mirror Tower" (Spiegel thurm) and other parts of vantage were garrisoned, and the wooden bridges leading over the river were torn down, with one exception. Meanwhile the streets were in a state of uproar. Enthusiasts rushed through them swinging weapons in the air and proclaiming the day of the Lord. On the other side, an urgent message was despatched to the Prince-Bishop. The latter promised, without prejudice to the rights and privileges of the town, to enter with a

numerous body of cavalry and restore order, if the civic authorities would leave two gates open to him. But the Evangelicals were mistrustful of the Episcopal assurances, and with good reason feared that, if successful, the opportunity would be used for crushing the Reformation in Münster altogether. The Anabaptists now sent some horsemen to the principal armoury situated at the so-called Aegidi-gate to seize the cannon. The party of order, on hearing of this, immediately despatched fifty armed men to forestall them. These only succeeded in laying hands on one piece of ordnance however. Messages were now sent to the neighbouring villages, calling on the peasants to come to the assistance of order and Münster. Night coming on put an end for the moment to actual hostilities though not to the excitement in the town. The fanatics continued to parade the streets, women as well as men, singing, praying, and declaring that Heaven was opening and that a legion of angels was about to descend on the town to deliver the saints and root out the godless. But the cooler heads of the revolutionary party took care to place guards at the several positions occupied by them, at the various gates that they

had seized, at the principal marketplace *(Prinzipalmarkt)* and the *Rathhaus*.

Similar measures were taken by the Evangelicals and Catholics, now united on behalf of the Council and government of the town. The rallying cry of the Anabaptists was "Father," that of the Party of Order was "Christ." At dawn, Knipperdollinck was arrested in the quarter of the town known as the "Ueberwasser," by the second Bürgermeister. Whilst endeavouring to raise the populace, he was incarcerated with twenty-five other Anabaptists in a tower on the city wall hard by. The belfry of the church of St. Lamberti now began to boom forth its call to arms and the streets to fill with excited crowds and to resound with the clashing of weapons. The two Bürgermeisters, the Syndic, and several Councillors now hurriedly met in the *Rathhaus*, which the insurgents would seem to have evacuated, but the street in front of the Municipal buildings rapidly filled with armed rebels, clamorously demanding the release of their imprisoned brethren. The authorities temporised whilst their Catholic and Evangelical allies hurried up to defend the civic headquarters. The battle lasted for some hours,

when the party of order was compelled to retreat. At this moment, the country people, who, in response to the summons of the previous evening, had since early morning begun to arrive, suddenly appeared to aid the defence. A report at the same time was spread that the Bishop with his men-at-arms was marching on the city. This circumstance, more than the arrival of the reinforcements, made the Anabaptists, who up to this time had had the best of the fight, willing to negotiate. This was probably further facilitated by the fact that the Chief Bürgermeister, Tylbeck, was known to be secretly sympathetic to their cause. The negotiations were opened, Tylbeck having replied to the Prince-Bishop's messengers sent to apprise him of the coming of his over-lord, that he required no outside help for the restoration of order in the city. An agreement was come to by which freedom in religious matters was to be strictly maintained, whilst in secular affairs the lawful authority was to be obeyed. All prisoners were set free and a general amnesty proclaimed. Peasants who had come to assist law and order were regaled in the *Rathhaus* at the cost of the town, after which they returned home to their respective villages.

By the time this peace was concluded, the Bishop with his horsemen had arrived within striking distance of Münster. On hearing of the turn things had taken within the walls, he was furious, but, with the town closed against him, there was nothing for it but to go back. Tylbeck, it is alleged, with a view of keeping the matter in his own hands, had not communicated to his colleagues the letter he had received from the Bishop the previous evening, announcing his intention of entering the city with an armed force on the morrow. But it was perfectly evident that the Bishop, though for the moment compelled to desist from his intention, would never accept the "dogs' peace," as the party of order afterwards termed it, that had just been concluded. If it was to be maintained, the city would have to prepare for the eventuality of a siege at the hands of its Prince-Bishop. In view of this, large numbers of well-to-do burghers, who themselves disapproved of the arrangement that had been come to, left the city during the next few days.

On the other hand, the stream of Anabaptist immigration received a further and hitherto unparalleled impetus, not merely from the immunity

that now seemed guaranteed under the shadow of St. Lamberti, but from the action of Knipperdollinck, through Rothmann, who by this time had become the mere instrument of the new prophets. Knipperdollinck and the prophets made Rothmann write a circular letter to the Anabaptist communities in other towns, couched as follows:—

"Bernhardt Rothmann, the servant of the Heavenly Father, to all His brethren who dwell among the heathen, health and divine blessing! Be it known to ye all that the Heavenly Father hath sent unto us certain prophets who proclaim the pure word of God with most marvellous gift of tongue and in the spirit of everlasting salvation! He who seeketh his everlasting salvation, let him forsake all worldly goods, and let him with wife and with children come unto us here to the New Jerusalem, to Zion, to the Temple of Solomon! Besides the treasure in Heaven it shall be requited to him tenfold in money and goods for that which he hath left behind him!" This letter was despatched by special messengers, far and wide, to a large number of towns, to almost all the towns of Westphalia, to Osnabrück, Soest, Wesel,

etc. and to many other territories as well, as far as Lübeck and Hamburg. Heinrich Krechting, a local magnate of the town of Schoppingen, was the leader of a little body of the faithful to the new Zion. He and his party, who brought a baggage train with them, were seized at a small town two hours from Münster, where he was imprisoned. His son, however, succeeded in escaping, and hurrying to Münster brought back with him a body of a hundred and fifty Anabaptists, who liberated his father, and took him and his safely to the haven of the saints. Heinrich's brother, Bernhardt Krechting, a pastor, soon afterwards arrived, bringing with him his congregation. Peter Schwering, a wealthy merchant, also led a body of followers from Coesfeld. For days the roads leading to Münster were crowded with Anabaptist pilgrims from every side, some alone with the staff in their hands, others in parties consisting of their families and friends, bringing with them waggons containing such of their household stuff as they could transport; large numbers mad with religious excitement, dancing and singing "Hosannah." Holland and Friesland furnished the largest contingents among the pilgrims.

The peace had scarcely been concluded, when, as we are informed, (by hostile witnesses certainly) the women of the Anabaptist party began on a larger scale the pious orgies which had been going on at intervals for weeks past in Anabaptist circles of the city. Knipperdollinck's wife and mother-in-law, it is stated, rushed, with black veils over their heads, up and down the streets, calling the women to repentance. The response was immense. Women flocked after them from all wards of the city through the streets to the chief market-place, their hair flying in the wind, their clothes disordered, and, in some cases, half naked. One eye-witness relates that they threw themselves on their faces on the ground, and tore their breasts, stretching their arms out so as to form a cross, whilst others lay on their backs, foaming at the mouth, staring up at the sky with a look of anxious expectation. They would then spring up, raving, grinding their teeth, and clapping their hands, invoking blessings and curses from Heaven at the same time. Groups would utter loud shouts, crying that Heaven would protect the New Jerusalem. Everything was counted by these female fanatics as a sign sent from Heaven;

a stone appearing out of the snow that lay in the streets, a pool of blood proceeding from an ox recently killed in the slaughter-house hard by. All was miraculous, a token sent as an encouragement or a warning to the saints. Actual hallucinations were common. Some saw a great fire with blue and black flames descend from Heaven and cover the city; hysterical laughter and crying were heard on all hands. Ever and anon a group of men and women would be seen rushing through the streets shouting "Repent and be baptized! Slay the unbaptized heathen!" Suddenly the rays of the sun struck a newly-gilded weather-cock on one of the patrician houses of the market-place, dazzling the eyes of those who looked that way. The assembled women fell on their faces and, with folded hands, cried, "Oh! Father, Father, most excellent King of Zion, spare thy people!" Seeing the effect it produced, the weather-cock was removed by a sober-minded burgher, and the ecstasy of the crowd stopped at once. Within the next few days, the Bürgermeister Tylbeck, who, while secretly sympathising with the Anabaptists, had remained nominally the head of the constituted authorities of the city,

went over openly to the revolutionary party. Rothmann, after having, as stated formerly, re-baptized himself, conferred the symbol on others, especially on the nuns who daily fled from the convents in the town.

Amongst those to arrive within the next few days was none other than the greatest of the prophets, the *ci-devant* master-baker of Haarlem, Jan Matthys himself, bringing with him his newly wedded wife, a beautiful nun from the Convent of St. Agnes in his native city. Matthys now for some time had been convinced that Strasburg, which he had formerly in accordance with his master, Melchior Hoffmann, deemed the destined seat of the New Jerusalem, had been rejected, and that the Divine choice had fallen on the capital of the great Westphalian bishopric. Matthys, in his character of the prophet Enoch, the head of all the prophets of the new gospel, on his arrival formally proclaimed Münster as the city revealed to him by God as the seat of the millennial kingdom, in the place of Strasburg rejected for its unbelief. Against the city of the saints, said he, the powers of this world would be able to achieve nothing.

One day, the chief market-place was filled

with the faithful, come to hear an announcement of the great prophet. When Matthys appeared, he had with him two stone tablets which he placed on the steps of a well opposite the wall of St. Lamberti's churchyard. He then announced to the awestruck multitude that he had just spoken with the Lord of Hosts, that the spirit of the living God was upon him, declaring that he was ordained to impart to them the will of God. This was, first and foremost, that he and Jan van Leyden (Bockelson) should instruct them in the pure and holy service of God, such as was proper to a chosen people. Matthys concluded with the adjuration, "Almighty be our doctrine and our power, and praised be the will of our Father, Who has sent us here to found the New Jerusalem, the city of Regeneration, the thousand years Kingdom, according unto His Holy pleasure!"

Life in Münster was relieved by travesties of the dispossessed cultus. A waggon would be drawn up on the market-place, dragged by six Anabaptists in the garb of the religious orders, the driver representing the Prince-Bishop in his robes, whilst a man in priestly garments sat in the waggon reading a parody of the Mass.

The waggon was drawn through the streets surrounded by an excited crowd shouting, "Down with the Catholics! Down with the Evangelicals! Death to the heathen and to the godless!" The foreign elements produced by the recent immigration now considerably outnumbered the genuine burgher population, which was being daily diminished by withdrawals. The heads of the town government, finding themselves rapidly becoming powerless, fled. Tylbeck, as we have seen, went formally over to the Anabaptists, and his colleague, a patrician, and a chief pillar of the party of order escaped to a small town not far distant. The town Syndicus, Van der Wieck, left the city, with the intention of seeking an asylum in Bremen. He was, however, treacherously captured by men in the Bishop's service, a few miles from Münster, and after being taken from one prison to another, was beheaded without trial, by the Bishop's order. Van der Wieck was the leader of the orthodox Protestant party in Münster.

The town being now practically without a government, it was decided by the Anabaptist leaders to summon the inhabitants for the election of a new Council and officers. This was

done, with the result, as was obvious beforehand, that a Council and Government, composed entirely of Brethren, was got together. The head Bürgermeister, Tylbeck, notwithstanding his defection from the Party of Order, was not only not re-elected, but, which seemed rather hard, was for the time being thrown into prison. The leaders may conceivably have regarded him as a time-server, who trimmed his sails to the wind and whom it would not be safe to trust. In his stead, Bernhardt Knipperdollinck and his friend the master-tailor Kibbenbroick were chosen respectively to the posts of first and second Bürgermeister. Ever since the unstable "Peace" of February 10th the town had been virtually in the control of the Anabaptist leaders After the election of the new Council on February 28th, it came formally into their hands and was definitely organized as an Anabaptist community. The reign of the Saints had begun; Anabaptism had reached its zenith as a political power.

Before proceeding to the history of the events that followed, we will now pause to consider the whole movement, in general survey, up to this turning-point in its fortunes. As we have

seen it was the expression of tendencies which had been sporadic throughout the whole of the later Middle Ages, and which asserted themselves with renewed emphasis from the beginning of the Reformation. These tendencies were: (1) the thoroughgoing carrying-out of the notion of the right of private judgment in matters of religion as opposed to authority; (2) the democratic idea of the equality of all Christians, the duty of the Brethren, the true followers of Christ, to possess as though they possessed nothing, in a word to hold all things in common; (3) the belief in the approaching advent of the end of the world, or of the millennium. All these tendencies were absorbed after 1525 into the new movement under its distinctive sign, rebaptism, or adult baptism. The latter served as a symbol for the paramountcy of private judgment in matters of religion as opposed to that of a hierarchical Church-organisation into which an infant was received without any act of will on its part. It was also a convenient token by which the elect, the Saints, definitely proclaimed themselves as separate from the world. The doctrine of non-resistance, which was so prominent in the Anabaptism communities up till the

time that Jan Matthys obtained control of the movement in Holland and north-west Germany, —for before his time even Melchior Hoffmann and his followers were content, like the rest, with non-resistance till the great day had arrived— was a natural result of the literal interpretation of many passages in the New Testament. And this leads us once more to advert to an important feature of the movement, its strange atmosphere of Bible-reading to the exclusion of all other literature. This was also characteristic of earlier analagous movements, but not to the same extent as with the Anabaptists. During the Middle Ages proper, the knowledge of letters and the means of reading were scanty, while for the most part portions only of the Hebrew Scriptures were accessible at all in the vulgar tongue. There had been more than one translation into German of books of the Bible before Luther's, but it was Luther's translation that first made the Bible as a whole a household book and a personal possession of the German-speaking peoples. Amongst the skilled artisans, journeymen and better situated peasants of the early sixteenth century, there were not a few who could read sufficiently to make out the text of

the new German Bible, whilst those who could not read would form a circle round those who could, and the latter, from their coign of intellectual vantage, would not merely read, but would often expound, the text in their own fashion to their hearers. These informal Bible-readings became the chief religious function among the Anabaptists. This naive continuous and discursive study of the Old and New Testaments had its natural outcome in a population lacking almost all that constitutes what we now call education. Men and women read and re-read, heard and re-heard, pondered and re-pondered the text hallowed by its supposed divine origin, until they could think of nothing else. Soon they came to live in a dream-world, to re-live in their daily life and in the events of their own time, the narratives and prophetic visions of their one book. Destitute of all knowledge of history, save perhaps here and there an isolated fragment, there was no break for them between the biblical story and their own age. They, the Anabaptists, were the chosen people, who had come out of Babylon, renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil, prepared to meet the Messiah when he should

descend from the clouds upon the earth to establish the millennial kingdom of which the Apocalypse spoke. It is difficult for us nowadays to throw ourselves back into the state of mind of these guileless people, whose beliefs were no mere pious opinions kept in a compartment by themselves, and not affecting their everyday thought and action. They were to them certainties as real and living as the world surrounding them, and hence of quite as much practical moment as the affairs of their trade or as a journey about to be undertaken.

We have further to bear in mind, not merely the ideas themselves, but the mediæval background of thought that constituted their setting. No breath of criticism or disbelief in the modern sense touched them. The whole horizon of these simple folk was bounded by a supernatural view of the universe, now a more especially biblical supernaturalism, as it had before been the supernaturalism of the theory of the world and of man of popular mediæval Catholicism. The idea of inspiration was ever present to them. The only conflict that might possibly arise in this connection was the conflict between the inspiration enshrined in the letter of Holy Writ

and the inspiration that the inner light directly afforded to the soul of the individual believer. The Anabaptists, in perfectly consistent accordance with their Biblical-Christian theory of things, would admit no break in the conditions of revelation between biblical and primitive Christian times and the year of grace in which they then found themselves. Prophets were as possible in the third and fourth decade of the sixteenth century as they had been in the first century of the Christian era, or a thousand years before that era. Special revelation vouchsafed to the soul of the individual believer was as conceivable then as ever it had been, nay, was even likely to happen more frequently then than in years gone by, for did not all things point to the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies of Holy Writ, to the day being at hand when the Messiah should come with his legions of angels, preceded by Elias, to restore all things, to overthrow the kingdoms of this world with their principalities and powers, and establish the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, as the Metropolis of the world, the delight of all nations? Was it not written that the weak and the lowly should inherit the earth? and was it not now the poor

handicraftsman and peasant who accepted the true word? Was it not out of the ranks of the poor and the lowly that the new prophets were being called, to whom were vouchsafed the latest revelations of the will of the Father?

That, in a mental and moral atmosphere dominated by these beliefs, hysteria and actual insanity should be rife was only to be expected: the mind of whole sections of the population over a vast area of territory was hypnotized, and it needed not much that individuals, especially women, from out the masses held under control by the dominant beliefs, should completely lose their mental balance and become raving maniacs. Of course the stress of the economical circumstances consequent on that breaking up of the mediæval conditions of life, to which we have so often referred throughout these studies of the social side of the Reformation in Germany, was largely responsible for the sudden ascendency obtained by these views over the poorer populations of such extended territories, an ascendency which resulted in the focussing of the movement in one town, and in the remarkable events of the years 1534 and 1535 that followed. The political and economic aspirations of the demo-

cracies, especially of the German cities, called forth by the pressure of circumstances, readily and naturally clothed themselves in a religious or theological garb, whilst the religious aspirations themselves seemed to demand political and economic revolution as the conditions of their fulfilment.

The effect of the arrest of Melchior Hoffmann in Strasburg the previous year was considerable in these northern territories of the Empire, not merely among his actual disciples, numerous as they were, but amongst the susceptible and sympathetic population generally. The Brethren, who in pursuit of their handicraft had wandered north, related in their southern dialect with what confidence Hoffmann, on being thrown into prison, had thanked God that the hour had struck, had raised his hand to Heaven, and sworn by the living God that he would neither drink water nor eat bread till the time had arrived when he could with outstretched finger point to him who had sent him. They brought with them tracts that Hoffmann had written during his confinement and had succeeded in smuggling out of the prison to his adherents. Hoffmann had predicted that he would be seized

and imprisoned by the godless. His prophecy had come true. He had also predicted that he should be speedily released and be caught up in the clouds to join the Lord and return with him in glory to judge the earth. "Oh, Saints of God," he wrote from his prison, "raise your heads, your hearts, your eyes, your ears. Your salvation is before the door. All the plagues have been fulfilled save that of the seventh angel of vengeance."

Throughout the winter of 1533—1534 the tracts of Hoffmann were to be found in the hands of the popular party in Münster, and were earnestly studied. But the doctrines of Hoffmann contained, as compared with those of Matthys, a considerable non-resistance element. The notion that it was the duty of the elect to bear the evils God inflicted upon them, and to resist not those in authority, but to await the day of vengeance that would come in its good time, was still the predominant doctrine among the Melchiorites of Westphalia until the coming of the apostles of Jan Matthys early in January, 1534. Essentially the Anabaptism of Holland, Friesland and Westphalia was identical with the Anabaptism of Moravia, the Tyrol, and southern

Germany, as that was with the original doctrine as held and preached by the little pioneer community of Zürich constituted by Konrad Grebel and his friends. But there was one theory prevalent in the north-west, chiefly owing to the teaching of the two Melchiors, Hoffmann and Rink, (if we are to regard them as two persons) which was viewed with disfavour by most of the earlier communities of southern and south-eastern Germany, and this was the theory of the imminency of the second advent of Christ and of the millennium. This innovation, for the most part peculiar to the Anabaptists of the north-west, was not only not held by their brethren of the south, but was even on occasion strongly combated by them. And, as it turned out, this apocalyptic point of view, notwithstanding the apparent identity of doctrines otherwise, was destined to form a crucial line of demarcation between the earlier Anabaptism of the third decade of the century, which had its principal seat in south-eastern Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and the later Anabaptism of the fourth decade, which prevailed mainly in Holland, Friesland, Westphalia, and the north-west generally. From the belief and expectation of the

immediate advent of a day of vengeance, out of which would arise the reign of the saints on earth, it was but a step to the conviction that Providence would work his purposes through the human agency of the elect themselves. Melchior Hoffmann had prophesied his own imprisonment, his liberation, and the end of the age for the year 1533. The first of these prophecies proved correct, but the others disappointed the expectation of the many thousands of Melchior's followers. As the year 1533 became autumn, and as autumn faded into winter, and yet there was no sign of the anxiously awaited catastrophe, doubts must have arisen in the minds of many as to the infallibility of Hoffmann's interpretations of the signs of the times.

Doubts transformed themselves in the active and energetic mind of the master-baker of Haarlem into the conviction that the Saints themselves must take to the sword, that the time of enduring, forbearing, meekness and suffering was past, and that it was his mission to shew them the new way of vengeance and the destruction of the godless, by which they should accomplish the will of God, work out their own salvation, and inaugurate the millennial reign. The suc-

cess so rapid and so extraordinary of his followers, the apostles he sent forth into all the neighbouring lands, confirmed him in the belief in his divine mission. The wonderful reports brought to him of the events in Münster, of the victories gained by the elect over worldly authorities, of the zeal that inspired the whole population, at last left no doubt in his mind that Münster was the chosen city. This conviction once forced upon him, his course became clear. He, the prophet, specially chosen of God to prepare the way for Him, must depart without delay to this new city of God, to take the lead in the work of vengeance and regeneration.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS.

THE goal was now obtained by the election of the 23rd of February, and the reconstitution of the government of Münster. The Anabaptists obtained a supreme political power. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the Zion of the prophets was definitely founded. The old burghers of Münster were become an insignificant and powerless minority. As to the character of the new inhabitants of Münster, if we are to believe an "instruction" drawn up by the district assembly of Köln in October, 1534, it consisted largely of very questionable elements; "all fugitive, banished and evil-doing citizens and inhabitants from among the towns of the bishopric of Münster came thither together," are the words used. And again, in an official report to Bishop Franz von Waldeck, we read "so soon as the town had come into their power did they utterly overthrow all divine Christian order and justice, all spiritual and temporal rule and policy, and

did set up a bestial life." The histories that have been written subsequently of the great Anabaptist movement in Münster, from that of the contemporary Kerssenbroick downwards, have all been couched in this tone. The leaders of the Anabaptists were cunning and designing rogues, while their followers were the offscouring of the earth, composed of some fools and of more knaves, whose end was plunder, and whose means were anarchy. This, of course, is only one more instance of how the dominant class of every age writes history in its own interest, and of how it has hitherto succeeded not only in imposing its view on the average intelligence of its own time, but in handing it down to the second-hand historians of subsequent ages. These, as a rule, themselves the pensioners of the dominant classes of *their* own time, slavishly copy their predecessors in the art of slandering the enemies of an older ruling class. Now, at the beginning of the twentieth century, for the first time in history has the opposition to the interests of the propertied classes acquired sufficient strength and consistency to make headway against the distortion of history designed to pander to their passions. It would, of course,

be absurd to deny that amongst those who flocked from all sides to Münster in the name of the new doctrine, there may have been some individuals who might possibly answer to the descriptions officially given. In all movements whose seed-ground is a decaying economic state of things, are to be found the flotsom and jetsom cast forth by decay. In the early sixteenth century, we may be quite sure, the revolt against moribund feudalism was not ideal in all its individual elements. It would be manifestly foolish to expect such to be the case with sections of a population more or less suddenly cast adrift from their social and economic moorings. But at the same time there can be no doubt in the mind of any person who has seriously studied the history of social movements, that the bulk of those who thronged the city of Münster in the year 1534, were infinitely honester and nobler characters at bottom than the unscrupulous ruffians of the moribund feudalism with whom they were at war.

At the time at which we have now arrived, as already stated, the immigrants, of whom an important portion hailed from Holland, considerably outnumbered the original inhabitants who

remained within the walls. The question of language offered comparatively little difficulty, as the local Platt or Low German dialect of Westphalia closely approached that other Low-German dialect of Holland which, owing to its having become enshrined in a literature of its own, and to its being the dialect of a people through long centuries politically separated from the rest of Germany, we are accustomed to call the Dutch language—and so the newcomers and the Münsterites were mutually intelligible from the first. A few weeks doubtless sufficed to make the strangers proficients in the tongue of the native-born inhabitants.

Already before the new elections the Catholic churches and religious houses had been stormed and the contents rifled by crowds of zealots. Even the Cathedral was not spared. On the evening of the 24th of February it was entered and sacked, many remarkable specimens of mediæval art being destroyed. The notion of making a complete break with the past was carried to the point not merely of consigning to the flames all official documents and charters dealing with the feudal relations of the town, which would have been at least intelligible, but of handing

over to the same fate the priceless collection of mediæval and Renaissance manuscripts and printed books which had been formed by the patrician Rudolph von Langen. The systematic destruction of all manuscript or printed relics of the past that could be laid hands on, seems to have been carried out by the direct order of the new authorities, and the work lasted from the 15th to the 23rd of March. The wealthy church of St. Mauritz, outside the walls, where Bernhardt Rothmann had originally been called to the pulpit, was also burned to the ground, although in this case military reasons were assigned as an excuse. These measures, not unnaturally, excited the indignation of the Evangelical and Catholic burghers who had remained, an indignation which did not fail to show itself, in some cases in active opposition. The opposition of the older inhabitants to the work of destruction which the Anabaptists had resolved to carry through to the bitter end, led to the decision to slay or drive out the godless and the heathen, by which was understood all who refused to receive baptism at the hands of the brethren appointed to administer it. The decree enjoining this was issued for Friday, February

27th. It was the second Friday in Lent. On this day at seven o'clock in the morning, contingents of Anabaptists paraded the streets, shouting: "Away with the godless! God will straightway awake and will punish thee!" These contingents, which were armed with muskets, pikes, and halberds, proceeded themselves to accomplish the work of God in driving out the unbaptised men, women and children. It was a bitter cold winter's day, a cutting wind accompanied by sleet swept through the narrow streets and byways of the old mediæval city. Says Meister Heinrich Gresbeck: "One ought not on that same Friday to have hunted a dog from the town, so bitter was the weather on that same Friday." [1] A great cry was heard, according to Gresbeck, from the women and children, as they were driven out of the gates. (On the other hand, Gresbeck does not mention that the Bishop at this juncture was murdering every Anabaptist he could lay his hands on.) The one condition of being allowed to remain was the consent to undergo the cardinal Anabaptist rite of rebaptism. Those who pledged themselves to be rebaptized were immediately marched up to the market-

[1] *Geschichtsquellen des Bisthums Münster*, vol. 2, page 19.

place. On this day alone three hundred were baptized, but the baptizings lasted in all three days. After the ceremony was over, the rebaptized were required to repair to the house of one or other of the Bürgermeisters, Knipperdollinck and Kibbenbroick, and sign their name in a register which was kept there for the benefit of the new converts. Three or more Anabaptist bishops or shepherds remained in attendance all day long in the market-place to perform the ceremony, now required to be undergone by every inhabitant of Münster. The Anabaptist preachers, each of whom had a large vessel containing water standing before him, would first of all admonish the candidate for baptism to abandon his sins and follow goodness, after which he had to kneel down, when, bending low his head, he would receive from the hand of the administering "Bishop" three sconces full of water poured over it, one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Ghost. Those who were unable through age, infirmity, or sickness, to repair to the market-place were allowed, a representation to this effect being made, to receive the rite in their own homes, "but," observes Gres-

beck, "few of those who were thus baptized against their will were fully aware what they were to suffer, otherwise not so much as a child would have remained in the city." On the other hand, those who had been driven out as little dreamt that their expulsion meant a long exile from hearth and home. They had hoped that possibly in a few hours, or in any case, in a few days, they would have been permitted to quietly re-enter the city at another gate.

But this was not to be. Knipperdollinck and Kibbenbroick in conjunction with their Council organised a watch, having its centre in the market-place, with a banner and a watch-fire. The circuit of the walls was also carefully patrolled, Knipperdollinck and Kibbenbroick and the "prophets" between them taking it in turn to inspect matters. One night, as the two Bürgermeisters and Jan of Leyden were performing their duty, accompanied by two of the guards, they saw a great fire suspended in the air before the town, together with two gigantic swords. This fire, which the exalted imagination of the onlookers doubtless exaggerated and supplied with the two swords, probably had as its basis—as Meister Heinrich Gresbeck rationalistically sug-

gests—in a watch-fire made by the free-lances of the Bishop, who was beginning now to seriously organise the siege of the town. It was, however, immediately hailed by the Anabaptist chiefs as a sign from Heaven that God would watch over the town. Visions became now the order of the day and night. The faithful were informed that the appearance of three cities had been seen hovering over the town. One was Münster itself, another Strasburg, and a third Deventer. They were, it was said, the three cities chosen by God as the rallying places of the faithful, of which Münster was the chief. This survival of the original belief held by the Hoffmannites, that Strasburg was to be the Zion of the new movement, is noteworthy.

The Government of Münster now consisted, officially, of the two Bürgermeisters and the newly elected Anabaptist *Rath*, assisted, unofficially, but with so much the more real power, by Jan Matthys and his disciple Jan Bockelson of Leyden. One day, soon after the occurrences just referred to, Matthys and Bockelson called all the people together to the Cathedral. They then ordered those who had been baptised on the Friday to separate themselves from the

rest. These, like the remainder of the people, had come armed. They were, however, ordered to lay down their muskets and remove their armour, after which they had to lie on their faces and pray the Father that they might stay in the town and be accepted into grace. "For," said the preachers, "God would have nothing unclean in the city of Münster. He would have a holy people to praise his name." The multitude of the newly-baptised lay prostrate in this way for nearly an hour, "fearing," says Gresbeck, "lest they should be fallen upon and slaughtered by the Anabaptists." At last they were allowed to rise, and marched in procession to the church of St. Lamberti, where a similar ceremony was repeated, but genuine religious excitement seems to have seized these people also, for Gresbeck relates ("*Geschichtsquellen*," vol. 2, p. 24) that men and women embraced one another and danced, while invoking the Father. Women and children, he also states, "made a horrible din" *(gresslik Geluit)* in the church. Finally Jan of Leyden entered the church, and proceeding to the high altar, proclaimed: "Dear Brethren, it is God's will that I make known unto you, that ye have received Grace from God, and

shall remain with us and be his Holy people."

Tokens were now struck and distributed in St. Lamberti, bearing the inscription "The Word was made Flesh." A few weeks later others were distributed with the words "The Word was Flesh." These tokens were worn hung round the neck. Woe betide anyone now who doubted the authority of the prophets, or attempted to make a jest of their mission. One of the town guards, a smith named Rüscher, while performing his watch was rash enough one night to observe—"The prophets will prophesy till they've broken our necks. One might think they had a devil in their bodies." This was reported to the great men and their preachers, who thereupon had the luckless soldier seized and thrown into one of the towers. The next day a general assembly of the men was called to adjudicate on the matter. On the prisoner being brought and placed in the midst of the Assembly, the Prophets and the Preachers charged him with having spoken disrespectfully of God, his Prophets and his Apostles, repeating the words he had said. On his confessing the truth of the allegation, the Prophets and the Apostles or Preachers declared

him worthy of death, since he had incurred God's wrath. In spite of the protests of the Münster burghers, including the second Bürgermeister Kibbenbroick, Jan of Leyden seized a halberd and stabbed him twice in the body. He was subsequently brought to the Cathedral, where he threw himself upon the ground, in the sight of the people, begging for mercy. Matthys then took up a musket, as though he would shoot the delinquent, but, according to Gresbeck, the firearm refused to go off. The probability is that the whole thing was intended by the leaders simply as a piece of play-acting to intimidate the disaffected. Gresbeck alleges that Matthys subsequently shot him through the body, but without killing him. This, however, is incredible, seeing he relates the man walked home afterwards. A day or two later the Prophets and the Preachers came to the house and informed him that it was the will of God that he should not die, but recover; as fate would have it, however, he did die within a week. A free-lance who had found his way into the town, and had been heard to threaten to shoot one of the preachers, was executed. This last execution will hardly excite surprise as the free-lance

obviously laid himself open to being dealt with severely. As regards the case of the too free-spoken citizen of the town-guard, although he undoubtedly, if Gresbeck's report is to be credited, received injuries from which he died, it would not seem that the intention was to kill him, and even here allowance must be made for the condition of a besieged town, and the feelings of men who daily lived in the fear of traitors. In fact, the ruthless bias of the verdict of the conventional historian, full as he is of dominant class-prejudices against all that threatens dominant class-interest, is crucially exhibited in his judgment of this affair of Münster, as in the case of the Paris of the Revolution, the Paris of the Commune, and in other similar instances. The aforesaid historian assumes the right to judge men under conditions of great popular excitement and imminent danger from without, by the same standard that he would have a right to apply to them under normal conditions. He never for a moment dreams of dealing out the same measure to highly respectable governments representing class-interests under analogous circumstances. Münster in 1534, however different otherwise, was, in this respect,

like the Paris of 1792. It was a community imminently threatened by an external foe, for which the toleration of traitors or spies in its midst meant ruin and destruction. Under these circumstances, naturally, deeds are done and justifiably done, which under normal circumstances would be rightly condemned. The critic and historian who so unsparingly condemns the Anabaptists of Münster for certain executions or other events that took place during the siege of the town, or the *sans-culottes* of Paris for the September massacres, when the arrival before the city of the armies of the European coalition seemed to be only a matter of days, would never think of treating similar acts—even though perpetrated on a much greater scale,—when an orthodox government is in question, by similar severe canons, but coolly waves them aside with remarks about the unhappy necessities of the situation, or even with stale phrases such as that "war is war," and the like. Circumstances, though they may not excuse everything, do undoubtedly excuse a great deal, and those who have exceeded the limits of what may be excused or condoned by circumstances, have been assuredly far more often represent-

atives of law and order, that is, of the privileged classes, than the depositaries of the power of popular insurrection.

After the newly-baptized had been duly received by Jan of Leyden in the cathedral, and had had the hands of two of the foremost preachers laid on their heads with a blessing, the Anabaptists believed themselves comparatively secure against internal traitors. The next procedure was to endeavour to organise the kingdom of God as it was conceived by the Anabaptists generally, and especially as formulated by Matthys. This involved on the economic side Communism, not in the means of production, as modern Socialism demands, but in the objects of consumption, as mediæval Christian Communism demanded. Accordingly, as Gresbeck informs us, the Prophets, Preachers and the whole *Rath* took counsel together how they might make all goods common. Nevertheless no definite attempt seems to have been made to carry out a scheme of universal Communism. This was mainly limited to the precious metals. It was decided that all should bring their money, silver and gold to a certain place. Thereupon the prophets and the preachers proclaimed from

the pulpit that all should be common, and that one should have as much as the other. "Dear Brethren and Sisters," said they, "insomuch as we are one people, brethren and sisters, so it is the whole will of God that we bring our money, silver and gold together. One shall have so much as another. Each shall bring his money up to the chancery by the *Rathhaus*, there shall the Council sit and receive the money." Our friend Bernhardt Rothmann cried: "A Christian durst have no money be it silver or gold. He is a Christian, and all that Christian brethren or sisters have belongs to the one as much as to the other. The brethren shall possess no other thing *but their food*, *clothes*, *house and home*. What ye require that shall ye obtain. God will have nothing lying idle. One thing like the other shall be common to all. Such is the duty of us all. It is mine as well as thine, and thine as well as mine." Large numbers of the faithful, thus admonished, carried their portable property to the place appointed. Many brought their entire possessions in money and precious metals; others brought a large quantity, while keeping a residue for private purposes. The latter were suspect, while those who refused

to comply with the order at all, chiefly those who had been compulsorily baptized on the momentous Friday, were declared to be godless, and to merit being rooted out. Against such Jan of Leyden inveighed in the market place. They were declared outlaws from the Christian community, and were threatened with so severe penalties that they were forced to yield. As will be seen, the Communism of the Anabaptists was very largely the exaggerated Christian almsgiving of the Annanias and Sapphira episode, modified, it is true, by a little coercion, but in its form at least, voluntary.

In every parish of the town three deacons were appointed to administer the common good in the shape of provisions. Here a more genuine communism was inaugurated, but was imperfectly carried out. The deacons went into all the houses, impounding corn, meat and vegetables, and after they had made a note of what they required for the use of the poor citizens, all above what was notified the proprietors might keep for themselves.

To emphasise the solidarity of the community of the saints, common meals were now instituted. In front of every gate leading out

of the city a house was taken over, which was called the house of the community; every one could go and eat there, though it was probably specially designed for the defenders who kept watch, or who worked at the defences of moat and wall. Before every gate there was a captain and a preacher. Each deacon was responsible for one of these houses, whose function it was to supply the comestibles and to superintend the cook and caretaker of the house. During the mid-day meals, a youth was appointed to read a chapter from the Old Testament or from the Prophets. When those assembled had finished they sang a psalm in the vernacular, after which they rose up and left. Thereupon, the rank and file having had their food, the captains and officers of the administration would sit down to table, on the principle of the last being first and the first last. The deacons further took the meat, bacon, and corn from the monasteries and the cellars of those burghers who had left the town. Gresbeck states that in the summer of 1534 ten to twelve hundred oxen were consumed, together with a quantity of other meat, butter and cheese, besides codfish and herring. Herring, however,

appears not to have been popular in the earlier days when there was plenty, though, as Gresbeck observes, the time came afterwards, as the town began to suffer from the effects of the continued siege, when men were glad enough to get herring to eat.

It was not long before a modification was introduced into the government of the town. The prophets with the preachers or apostles, as they were variously called, chafed at being nominally under the control of the secular authority of the Bürgermeisters and the Great Council, notwithstanding that the latter was composed, as we have already seen, of fanatical Anabaptists elected on the 23rd of February. The prophets and preachers were almost entirely composed of Dutchmen and Frieslanders.

One day Jan Matthys invited some of his countrymen and others to a feast, for the doctrine of Matthys did not involve asceticism or the mortification of the flesh. In the middle of the proceedings Matthys became grave, threw up his hands, and was silent for a few moments. The guests were stricken with amazement. Suddenly he rose up, and with the words: "Oh dear Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

gave each person present his hand, at the same time kissing him on the lips, with the words "God's peace be with you all." After which he departed with his wife. The other guests, after remaining some time longer, also departed on their several ways. The next day Jan Matthys, taking with him some twenty companions, made a sortie from the town upon the camp of the enemy outside the walls. The attack seems to have been courageous, but the handful of men was soon overpowered, and Jan Matthys fell pierced with a pike. His corpse was immediately seized by the Bishop's free-lances, his head severed from his body, and the latter, we are told, hewn into a hundred pieces. The Bishop's free-lances then called over the walls to the Anabaptists in the town, that they should come out and fetch their leader.

Jan Matthys is described as a tall man with a long black beard. His death spread consternation among the faithful within the walls, especially among the Dutchmen and Frieslanders. With the death of Matthys, his disciple, Jan Bockelson of Leyden, naturally became the leader of the movement and the head of the city.

Matthys has, of course, been represented by the conventional class-historian as a designing rogue, who for his own purposes deceived the people. It is scarcely necessary to point out to the impartial reader how utterly inconsistent is this theory with the admitted circumstances of his death. The master-baker of Haarlem was doubtless a genuine fanatic, if there ever was one, who believed in all truth and sincerity in his having been entrusted with a divine mission. Much has been made, as shewing his eagerness for the good things of life, in his having brought a young and beautiful wife from Haarlem to Münster. These same historians find nothing inconsistent with the sincerity of Luther in his having adjured celibacy and taken to himself a wife. The fact was, in this respect the two men resembled one another. Jan Matthys no more believed or professed asceticism than Martin Luther. Consistent to the last, Matthys, in true Anabaptist fashion, when in the midst of a feast with his friends, became suddenly inspired with the idea that he had a call to risk his life on the morrow at the head of a handful of followers, in order to free the New Jerusalem from the besieging cohorts of this world. He loyally

carried out the mandate of what he believed to be the will of God as revealed to him, and in this way, fearless, and faithful to his convictions, went to his death.

The same religious fanaticism which animated Matthys continued to inspire his followers. A young woman from Friesland, described as exceptionally beautiful, conceived the idea of acting the part of another Judith, and assassinating the arch-enemy of the New Israel, Bishop Franz von Waldeck himself. She left the town amid the blessings of the prophets, the preachers, and Knipperdollinck. Believing it to have been revealed to her that she should enter unscathed in open daylight the camp of the enemy, she passed out of the gate only to be arrested by the outposts. Brought before the Bishop's Provost, Theodor von Meerfeld, she first excused her proceeding by alleging that she was weary of the life in the town, and that she had purposely allowed herself to be made prisoner in order to reveal to the Bishop the best way of obtaining entrance. She refused, however, to disclose anything except to the Prince-Bishop himself, and demanded to be taken to him. Meanwhile one of the original town burghers,

who knew of the plan, managed to escape, and also get himself arrested by the Bishop's sentries. In consequence of this man's denunciation Hille Feiken, the would-be Judith, was placed on the rack, and a full confession extorted from her. In the course of her evidence obtained in this manner she stated that before coming to Münster she had given away all the property she possessed in her native place, that she needed neither money nor goods, her one desire being to live with the saints in the New Jerusalem, and that for this reason she had wandered thither. The only reward she hoped for in the success of her enterprise was the knowledge that she had delivered the saints of God from their enemy. She was willing to suffer whatever might befall her. Nothing should turn her, neither suffering nor death, from the word of God as preached by his prophets. She was beheaded after having made her confession.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NEW ISRAEL.

In the midst of the consternation and depression among the Brethren of Münster, caused by the death of their great prophet, the voice of Jan Bockelson of Leyden, his disciple, was heard in a public assembly which he had called, praying the brethren not to despair because their leader had fallen, "for," said he, "God shall raise up unto us another prophet, who shall be greater and higher than was even Jan Matthys. God willed that Matthys should die, his time was come, and God hath let him die, to the end that ye should not place all your faith in him and hold him for higher than God. For what Matthys did and prophesied was even done by God through him, and God is even mighty enough to give unto us a new prophet in his stead." The oration delivered on this occasion raised Bockelson to a position in the public mind greater than even that he had previously occupied, and secured for him without contradiction

the reversion of the prophetic mantle of Matthys, for which he had long seemed destined.

The doctrine that Münster was the holy city, that God would have it, that all who dwelt therein should be a holy people, and that all those still in sin must be rooted out, was incessantly preached. After every exhortation of this kind, the disciples of the new prophet would once more dash through the streets and lanes of the town, brandishing their naked swords, dancing, and crying: "Father, father, give us light!"

The temporary depression caused by the fate of Jan Matthys was soon followed by the reaction in the shape of a fresh wave of fanaticism. Once more women and girls were to be seen with hair floating in the wind and their dress in disorder, dancing in the cathedral close, anon proceeding thence in wild capers through the town, up one street and down another, crying "Father, father, father, give, give, give!" They would advance in pairs and then join hands and dance until they could dance no more. As they were led home exhausted they looked, says our contemporary chronicler Gresbeck, "so pale and so white of countenance, even as though they had been dead."

The nominal government of the town had been from the first, as may be imagined, little more than an instrument in the hands of the prophets and their followers. Jan of Leyden now bethought himself of consolidating his own power as leader and of organising the community of the Saints in even more exact accordance than heretofore with the principles of Anabaptism as interpreted by his master Jan Matthys and himself. Jan Bockelson had something more than the mere *élan* of the fanatic and enthusiast, such, for instance, as Melchior Hoffmann. He had considerable capacity for organisation, keenness of insight into the characters and motives of men, and great political adroitness. He knew how to utilise in the most effective way his extraordinary gift of popular oratory and to win the now mixed population of Münster for the ideas which he had doubtless persuaded himself into sincerely believing, that Münster was the chosen city of God, and that the power of its holy Saints was ordained to extend itself over all nations, tongues and peoples. Such was the constant theme of his discourses on the frequent occasions when the citizens were called together in public assembly.

Thus enthusiasm was never allowed to flag. But, in addition to his hold on the people, Jan of Leyden had the tact to retain, outwardly at least, the confidence of the leaders who had previously acted under Matthys. Bernhardt Rothmann, Heinrich Krechting, of whose arrival in Münster we have already spoken, and, above all, Bernhardt Knipperdollinck, became avowedly staunch henchmen. Bockelson now determined that it was time to abolish even the show of an independent secular power such as was ostensibly vested in the Council and Bürgermeisters elected on February 23rd. The New Jerusalem must have a definitely theocratic constitution. The organisation of the New Israel should be modelled on that of the Old. One day, therefore, Jan called the inhabitants together and informed them that he had received a divine revelation to the effect that a new government must be set up. The old one, said he, was appointed after the manner of men; the new one should be established by God himself on the model given in the Holy Scriptures. The proposition was at once agreed to, no man daring to gainsay the prophet.

Jan next proceeded to name twelve "elders,"

influential men of the town, some of them members of the old council. Among them was the ex-bürgermeister Hermann Tylbeck, who was now again received into Anabaptist favour. These elders Bockelson presented to the people, amidst their acclamations, as their future government, at the same time publicly handing over to them the sword of justice, intimating thereby that they had power over life and death. In imitation of the biblical model a table of the law was drawn up, containing amongst others the following provisions: "Each shall perform his allotted task with diligence, shall fear God and the authority set over him, for it beareth not the sword in vain, but is the avenger of evil deeds. All things which the elders determine, the prophet Jan of Leyden shall, as the true servant of the Almighty and of his holy authority, proclaim to the congregation. Bernhardt Knipperdollinck shall be the guardian of public order and the magistrate to whom is intrusted the carrying out of the decisions of the elders. To this end he shall be accompanied by four attendants in arms."

The new constitution, embodied in this table of the law, contained in all thirty-one articles.

Some there were regulating the victualling of the New Israel, the fabrication of clothes and other details affecting the industrial and economic life of the community. Seven deacons with subdeacons were appointed to superintend and organise this department, which included the establishment and maintenance of the daily meals, already referred to as being taken by the brethren in common at the public tables. The military and defensive operations formed another department of the administration. Church-bells and the metal coating of steeples were melted down and used for military purposes. Heinrich Krechting was appointed chancellor, and his signature was necessary to give effect to all public documents. A common garb was enacted, and a special cloth provided, that the clothing department was to use in its manufacture. The table of the law concluded with the provision "Every member of the New Israel shall follow without wavering every precept that the Holy Scripture setteth forth, according as it commandeth or forbiddeth aught."

The twelve Elders, who regarded themselves as representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel invariably had a large Bible lying open before

them as they took counsel. In their capacity of supreme criminal court a case came before them on June 28th, which has sometimes been quoted as an instance of the brutality of the Anabaptist *régime* in Münster. It is related that some free-lances, probably deserters from the Bishop's camp, were holding a carouse, and after they had continued their potations to the point of hilarious drunkenness, the innkeeper and his wife refused to serve them any more, at which they threatened to go and treat themselves from the inn-cellars. The innkeeper and his wife had them at once arrested and brought before the twelve, alleging their rights in their own house. The free-lances were ordered to be fettered and thrown into one of the towers. The next day they were called up to the cathedral close to be tried. Heinrich Krechting, the chancellor, then read the act of accusation which he had drawn up. Thereupon the free-lances fell upon their knees, begging for mercy and promising to work all day in the moat at the most laborious of the defensive operations, if they were but released. In the result some were allowed grace, whilst others were condemned to death. Of these, two were immediately

bound to lime-trees in the close, and shot through the body with firearms, while the rest were taken back to prison again. The following day they were again brought to the same place. This time four of the condemned were bound to trees and executed in the same manner as their companions had been the previous day. "So," observes our friend Meister Heinrich Gresbeck, "were these same fellows shot through because of a hasty word and a drink of beer." But here again, monstrous as the sentence seems, and at ordinary times doubtless would have been even in the Middle Ages, we must not forget the excessive dread, on the part of the Anabaptists, of disturbance in the town, which might be purposely got up to afford the opportunity of opening one of the gates to the enemy. The generally hostile witness, Gresbeck, admits the strength of this feeling as in some sort a palliation of the severity exercised. Moreover, the defenders were few compared to the besiegers, and their chief advantage over them lay in their sobriety as against the enemy's drunkenness.

The idea that absorbed the whole community, that the entire life and institutions of the Brethren

were to be founded on the Old Testament, was acted on up to the introduction of polygamy. This was decided at a meeting consisting of the twelve Elders and all the preachers, where it was broached by Jan of Leyden in person. In view of the well-known asceticism of the Anabaptists in general, Karl Kautsky is of the opinion that this step was rendered almost a necessity owing to the enormous excess of the female over the male population in the city. Certain it is, as he justly points out, that prostitution was not tolerated within the walls of the New Jerusalem. The very communism of the brethren itself sufficed to render this difficult or impossible, so that women who wished to live by the sale of their bodies had no alternative but to seek their market outside the walls amid the forces of law and order in the Bishop's camp. In addition to this, one of the first edicts of the twelve Elders was one of Draconian severity directed against adultery and seduction. It would look, indeed, as though the attempt to carry out sexual asceticism had broken down by its own weight and the weight of the conditions in which the town was placed, and that the leaders had no alternative left them

other than to regulate the disorder caused by nature asserting herself—a disorder which no number of ascetic edicts of however drastic a nature could effectually stem—by a legal modification of the marriage system adapted to the existing circumstances. How far the precedent of the Hebrew patriarchs and Kings influenced the decision of the Anabaptist authorities is impossible to say with certainty, though that it did so admits of no doubt. Whether Jan's appeal to biblical precedent and to the injunction to be fruitful and multiply, etc., was chiefly the cover used to sanction a measure which the prophet's astuteness in practical matters led him to see was indispensable, if the social organisation of Münster was to hold together, or whether the logical carrying-out of the idea of the New Israel already entered upon by him was the determining factor, it is at present impossible to decide. It may be remarked in this connection, that religious asceticism in sexual matters has invariably throughout history carried its own reaction within it. It has always tended to pass over into its opposite.

In any case it is certain that the number of women in Münster during the siege was little

short of three times that of the men, and that perhaps the larger number of these women were left quite without male protectors or friends, many of the original male burghers having fled and left their houses in charge of their womenkind. This of itself might have sufficed at least to suggest some modification of the marriage law in a sense adverse to strict monogamy. Jan, as stated, succeeded without much difficulty, in inducing the Elders and the Preachers to take this view of the matter. Rothmann, indeed, became especially enthusiastic on the question. As to the women, they seem to have been divided in their views. Some are said to have objected strongly, one indeed, we are told, preferring suicide to compliance. The majority, however, the evidence shows, readily and even joyfully acquiesced in the new order of things.

The edict enjoining all women to unite themselves with one of the brethren was promulgated by Rothmann as spokesman for the leaders, on July 23rd. It now became the test of good citizenship to carry out this mandate. Those who proposed to marry were to give three days notice, during which they were to pray that God would bless the new union with offspring, and

to vow to live to the honour and glory of God and his chosen people, the Saints. Rothmann adjured the people assembled in the cathedral close in enthusiastic tones that it was the will of the Lord that the Saints should increase and multiply as the sands of the sea, and that all who refused to accept the new matrimonial relations were incurring the wrath of God, which would sweep them from the earth. His discourse was greeted with shouts: "Long live the prophet!" The preacher, Bernhardt Krechting, brother of Heinrich, then cried out: "All his laws are holy and wise!" a cry that was repeated by the assembled concourse as one man. Therewith was the new *régime* inaugurated. But there remained some, specially among the men, otherwise zealous Anabaptists, who still had misgivings on the point. These the prophets in a series of discourses lasting three days, set themselves to convince, calling to their aid biblical examples of Abraham, Jacob, David, Solomon, etc. In this they seem to have been successful, so far at least as the otherwise sincere adherents of the Anabaptist doctrine were concerned.

The secret enemies, however, of the new

*régime* thought this a favourable moment to stir up strife and betray the town. A certain "master-smith," an ex-alderman, named Heinrich Möllenbecke, constituted himself the leader of this movement and soon gathered together some two hundred partisans, whom he persuaded to make a bold stroke for overthrowing the Anabaptist authority, seizing the leaders, and opening the gates to Franz von Waldeck, the Prince-Bishop. Accordingly, just a week after the promulgation of the edict concerning polygamy by Rothmann in the Cathedral close, on the 30th of July, at midnight, the houses of Bockelson, Rothmann, the Krechtings, Knipperdollinck, and other prominent Anabaptists, were broken into and they themselves bound and carried captive into the *Rathhaus*. The people having been called together, Möllenbecke and his accomplices endeavoured to enlist their sympathies for the *coup d'état* they had accomplished. The result was not encouraging to the conspirators, a few cheered, but the bulk either remained silent or gave vent to murmurings. Nothing daunted, the conspirators determined on the surrender of the town. Luckily for the Anabaptists, however, and unluckily for them-

selves, they resolved to postpone action to the following day. In the ensuing hours the loyal Anabaptists were not idle, and the following morning the call-drum, which Möllenbecke caused to be beaten for the purpose of rallying his followers on the Market-street, was also the signal for the Anabaptists, headed by the master-goldsmith Redecker, or as some accounts say Tylbeck, to appear on the scene. Considerably outnumbering the rebels as they did, they had no difficulty in scattering them, after making twelve prisoners. The ringleaders with a few followers retreated into the *Rathhaus*, which they made their citadel. Redecker and his friends, however, lost no time in posting cannon over against the municipal head-quarters, which after a short bombardment was forced to capitulate, Möllenbecke and his band being driven amid a shower of blows and curses to prison. Four thousand gulden stolen from the municipal coffers were found on their persons. Jan of Leyden and his colleagues were liberated amid the plaudits of the people.

The next day Möllenbecke and seven companions were fastened with iron bands round their necks to the lime-trees in the cathedral

close. Before them a judgment seat had been erected and on it sat the prophet himself. Having passed sentence of death, Jan called upon those present, as they would do God a service, to fire the first shot. The head conspirators, including Möllenbecke, having been despatched in this manner by the populace, Bockelson called upon Knipperdollinck and his four assistants to deal justice to the remaining prisoners, fifty-eight in number, who had been guarded in the background. Knipperdollinck, with the red mantle of the executioner thrown over his arm, stepped forward holding aloft the great sword. One after another the remaining prisoners were beheaded and their corpses buried in two large ditches. Reactionary writers have of course made the most of this exercise of martial law, to the detriment of the Anabaptists, conveniently forgetting that had such executions taken place at the behest of the representatives of class-interest and its order, they would have been the first to applaud the act as showing "vigour" under circumstances calling for a "strong hand."

The measures adopted on this occasion, in any case, seem to have had the effect of

silencing opposition to the new edict and the Anabaptist administration generally. It was now compulsory for every woman to have a husband, although the choice of whom they would have was left to them. All previous marriages were held to be dissolved as such by the new edict. In most cases, however, the original wives remained on condition of cheerfully receiving the new comers, whom they were to embrace with the greeting: "Welcome, dear Christian sister!" This did not prevent disturbances from arising in households between the womenfolk. So serious did this become in certain cases that the authorities had to step in, and numbers of quarrelsome women were arrested and imprisoned in the Rosenthal Monastery, which had been set apart for the purpose. In those cases where the continuance of marital relations or of cohabitation proved untenable, divorces were granted.

The prophet Bockelson set the example of obedience to the new regulation, in taking to himself three wives, Divara, widow of the deceased Jan Matthys, Knipperdollinck's daughter Klara, and Margaretha Modersohn. Rothmann also took three wives, a course soon followed by the other

leaders, including the Krechtings and Knipperdollinck himself. The original wife of Knipperdollinck, having spoken evil words of the edict enjoining this reconstruction of domestic relations, had to suffer the penalty. She was compelled to stand for some hours on the *Prinzipalmarkt*, holding the executioner's sword, and then to humbly beg forgiveness. Six schools were now established in different parts of the town for the instruction of the children in the Anabaptist doctrine.

Meanwhile the siege was continuing, but the military situation was not unfavorable to the Anabaptists. After vainly endeavouring to initiate negotiations for peace early in May, the manning of the fortifications had been carried on with redoubled vigour and sorties made almost daily. The Bishop, already sorely tried in his resources, resolved to attempt to carry the town by storm. A demand for surrender was accordingly made on Whitsunday, May 24th. On the demand being refused, preparations were made for the assault. Owing, however, to premature movement of one of the divisions of the besieging army, as well as to the vigilance of the Anabaptist guards on the walls, Bockelson, the Krechtings,

and Knipperdollinck had time to organise their followers, who encountered the Bishop's forces with such a vigorous resistance that they were driven back in confusion with heavy loss, amidst the triumphant shouts of the defenders.

This success naturally contributed to further the Anabaptist cause, not only in Münster but throughout the whole of the neighbouring territories, and seemed to give hope of a diversion in the shape of a general rising. For the next three months no further attempt on a great scale was made by the besiegers to seize the town, the idea being apparently to reduce it by famine. Towards the end of August, however, the inhabitants perceived indications of a renewed assault being in preparation. The defenders could see from the walls that trenches were being dug, cannon brought into position, and an unwonted activity displayed in the camp. The result was once more enthusiasm and organisation on the part of the Anabaptists; this time all the inhabitants of the town, old and young, including the women, according to Gresbeck, hurried to the walls to assist in the work. "Within the city," says he, "was not one left, save old people and sick people." The practice of chaffing

the soldiers of the Bishop, a favourite diversion of the Anabaptists on the walls, was freely resorted to on this occasion. "When will ye come? We have baked and brewed, three and four nights long, the brew is long finished: will ye not come?" But it was not before the next morning that the Bishop's free-lances ventured on the attack. Meanwhile every preparation had been made to receive them. On the first signal of battle, the defenders crowded to man the outer fortifications and the gates, which were the object of attack, and with them they brought "tar-wreaths," heavy stones, and vessels containing boiling water and quick-lime, all which things were hurled down on the heads of the assaulting free-lances, who, driven back, returned again to the charge, and in some instances three times, but in vain. Leaving numbers of dead and wounded behind them, they were forced at length to retreat into their camp, once more amid the derisive cries and mocking challenges of the Münsterites. After this success Jan of Leyden, with his colleagues and the Preachers, headed a joyous procession through the town, singing hymns of thanksgiving. Addressing the assembled people: "Dear brethren," said Jan, "have we

not a strong God? He it is who has helped us. With our own might we had not done it. Let us now be joyful, and give thanks to the Father!" The danger passed, no time was lost in rebuilding the gates destroyed by the onslaught of the free-lances and in repairing the fortifications.

But this military success was not merely of moment for the defence of the town. It also had important results in matters of internal politics, since it was the direct occasion of the assumption by Jan of Leyden of the dignity of King of the New Zion. The idea, it is said, had already been mooted amongst the leaders. It was indeed in consonance, like the rest of their organisation, with the biblical model. A few days after the defeat of the Bishop's army an Anabaptist preacher, who recently had attained the rank of prophet, appeared on the *Prinzipalmarkt* before the assembled people, declaring that the Heavenly Father had revealed to him that Jan of Leyden, that holy man and prophet of God, had been divinely called to be King of the whole earth, to cast down the mighty from their seats and raise up them of low degree. To him should be given the crown, sceptre, and throne of his father David, until God should

take it from him again. He then called upon the twelve Elders to resign their office into the hands of the new King, and, as a symbol thereof, to hand over the sword of justice which they had received on their appointment. On the Elders surrendering their sword of office to the speaker, the latter, calling upon Jan of Leyden, then formally handed over the emblem of supreme authority to the new King, with the words: "Receive this sword of justice, and therewith the power to bring all the peoples on the earth under thy authority!" Having then anointed the head of Jan, in biblical fashion, he proclaimed in a loud voice: "In the face of the whole people of God, I declare thee hereby King of the New Zion." Thereupon, the anointed one, Jan Bockelson of Leyden, himself stepped forward to address the people: "God hath chosen me," he said, "to be King over the whole world. But I tell ye, dear brethren and sisters, I had rather tend the swine or follow the plough than be King. Yet that which I do, I must forsooth do, in that God hath appointed me thereto." After he had thus spoken, Gresbeck tells us, the people remained silent, until Jan called upon them

to praise and thank God, upon which they broke out into the hymn: "To God on high alone be praise," after which the assembly dispersed.

The first act of Jan of Leyden, in his new capacity, was the re-organisation of public functions. The twelve Elders resigned as such, though many were appointed to places in the new organisation. Jan reserved to himself the office of public executioner. The meaning of this, as Kautzky has pointed out, is not far to seek. The office of executioner, in mediæval times, was reckoned the lowest and most degraded calling, involving social ostracism. Bockelson, therefore, in his new capacity of King of Zion, in taking upon himself the obloquy of this office, was only following out the New Testament injunction, so dear to the Anabaptist heart, that the first should be last and that he who would be highest should be servant of all. Knipperdollinck became in this, as in all other functions, the representative, or vice-steward, of the King. Rothmann was made royal orator and steward. Most of the former twelve Elders, with other prominent Anabaptists, became royal counsellors. Hermann Tylbeck was made master of the ceremonies.

Jan, who, like his master, Matthys, was no puritan, but, on the contrary, seems to have always had a taste for the dramatic and was never averse to display as such, arranged his court down to the smallest detail, with due regard to scenic effect. He always appeared in public richly attired and surrounded by a numerous retinue. Two crowns were made for him, a royal crown and an imperial crown, both of which were of the finest gold and covered with precious stones. He wore a golden chain, still extant, to which a ball was attached, containing two crossed swords, the ball emblematic of the world, the crossed swords of the highest jurisdiction. On the ball was a golden cross on which were the words: "A King of righteousness everywhere." His royal sword, with its golden sheath, was attached to a heavy golden belt. The sceptre was rich in gold and precious stones. The goldsmiths' and tailors' guilds in the New Jerusalem were busily employed for weeks in furnishing forth the insignia of the new court. For the numerous retinue were attired on a scale of corresponding magnificence. Their garments of the finest cloth and silk were light blue and red; on their

arms gleamed the heraldic shield of the new Kingdom, the globe, the cross, and the swords. Divara, the late widow of Matthys, noted for her beauty, was named queen by Bockelson, the other wives being enjoined to obey her in all things. Even these secondary wives, however, were allowed to gratify their vanity to the full in the matter of dress and toilet luxuries. On the *Prinzipalmarkt* a magnificent throne was erected, to which the King repaired three times a week in state, to administer justice. On these occasions his coming was heralded by a fanfare of trumpets. Before him marched the master of the ceremonies, Hermann Tylbeck, with a white staff in his hand. Immediately behind followed the King, attired in his royal garments, the crown on his head, the sceptre in his hand, riding on a white horse and accompanied by two gorgeously dressed pages, one on either side, one bearing the Old Testament and the other the great sword of justice. A long procession followed, headed by the vicegerent Knipperdollinck, the royal orator Rothmann and the newly appointed chancellor Krechting. The rest of the procession consisted of councillors and attendants on horse-

back and on foot, whilst bringing up the rear, came the royal bodyguard, who surrounded the throne and court during the judicial proceedings.

The pomp and magnificence of the new Kingdom, Jan declared, was for the honor and glory of God. He, a poor human being, was simply acting as God's representative on earth. The time was at hand, said he, when the whole people of the New Israel should sit on silver chairs and eat from silver tables, when gold and silver would have no more value than common stones, for the Glory of this world should pass away into the hands of the Saints. Addressing the people on the first occasion that he thus appeared after his coronation, Jan painted in glowing terms to the citizens, the time coming when the Kingdom of God should be established over all the Kingdoms of the earth, when he and his followers should go forth from Münster conquering and to conquer. Bockelson showed himself in the new organisation at once energetic and politic, he had obtained the support and attached to his person all the influential Anabaptists in Münster. His bodyguard and

most of his courtiers were composed of his compatriots, the Dutchmen and Frieslanders.[1]

The pomp and show that characterised the reign of Jan Bockelson as King of the New Jerusalem has often enough been treated as conclusive evidence of hypocrisy. There is, however, no justification for this conclusion. It is quite admissible to suppose that these things were done simply to inspire confidence in the people by the outward signs of wealth and power. The whole wealth of the city appeared concentrated in the new state, in the official representation of the community of the Saints. To make this official representation of the new order of things as imposing as possible was to impress the imagination of the people, to keep their spirits

[1] In the account of the circumstances connected with the assumption of the Kingship by Jan of Leyden, I have in the main followed the treatment of the subject by Dr. Ludwig Keller, who in his capacity of Royal Librarian and Keeper of the Archives at Münster, has had the opportunity of investigating the whole of the extant state documents relating to the Anabaptists in Münster, and is hence the best court of appeal on doubtful points. I have purposely disregarded the foolish and malignant gossip of Kerssenbroick, which some later historians have repeated.

up, and to encourage them in their resistance, alike passive and active, to the common foe. To this must be added, however, that Jan had the dramatic instinct strong in him. It doubtless seemed to him appropriate that the New Jerusalem, the model of the kingdom of God throughout the earth, should be inaugurated with all the pomp and circumstance characteristic of mediæval temporal power. That as a mere matter of policy he was right, is indicated by the fact of the length of time the city held out, and of the comparative unanimity that the population displayed during the subsequent period of the siege.

A new prophet now arose in the person of one Henrikus, an ex-schoolmaster. One day, as the King was on his throne on the *Prinzipalmarkt*, surrounded by his court for the purpose of administering justice, this Henrikus rose up and declared that, for three nights in succession, he had been awakened at a certain hour by a voice saying: "Prepare." On the third night, he had fallen on his knees with a prayer: "Dear Father, what shall I prepare?" whereupon the voice answered him: "Thou shalt proclaim to my people great joy." After this

statement, Jan arose, saying: "Dear brethren and sisters, let us thank the Father," and thereupon knelt down. The assembled people did the same, singing a German psalm. Another day, Dusentschur, the goldsmith of Warendorf, he who had anointed Bockelson King and who had for some time held the rank of prophet, rose up on the *Prinzipalmarkt*, in the presence of the King and people, declaring that God had revealed to him a sumptuary ordinance respecting the number of clothes that Christian brethren and sisters might retain for their own use. This divine revelation, he explained, ordained that a man might not have in his possession more than one coat, two pairs of hose, two doublets, and three shirts; a woman only one skirt, one mantle and four chemises. No one should possess more than one bed and four sheets. This ordinance at once acquired the force of law. Bockelson ordered the deacons to make a house-to-house visitation sequestrating all the property that they found over and above the allotted measure. Thus far the communistic principles of Anabaptism were consistently carried out. All the riding horses of the town were now concentrated in the court of the King's

residence abutting on the cathedral close, and a squadron of light horse was now organised as additional body-guard. They were frequently exercised, clad in full armour, in front of the cathedral, in order that the people might be still further impressed with a sense of the material power at the disposal of their cause.

We have seen that Jan Bockelson had succeeded not only in acquiring the enthusiastic support of the people, but also in attaching all the leaders to him as supreme head of the Münster community. Whether this adhesion to the new order of things was in all cases purely voluntary has been called in question. Keller conjectures that especially Knipperdollinck and Rothmann had been driven by circumstances into the new position they occupied rather than had been consciously working for it. They certainly, more particularly Knipperdollinck, suffered a loss of power and prestige through the change. Rothmann had been for some months little more than the spokesman and echo of the Dutch prophets. But Knipperdollinck had until recently occupied the foremost position in the Münster Commonwealth. It is readily conceivable that the new development of things was not quite

to his liking. Certain actions of his are reported, tending to show that he at one time really meditated the overthrow of Bockelson. He withdrew himself, it is said, some days from public affairs into his house, and then went out declaring that he had a revelation, visiting, it is said, the people working at the defences. But the nature of the revelation our informant Gresbeck does not tell us.

Shortly afterwards, Knipperdollinck had the call to repentance cried in the streets, a practice which was common previous to the communication of some new revelation to the Brethren. It so happened that this was one of the days on which Jan held his court of justice on the market-place. As usual on such occasions, one of the preachers was addressing the multitude, it being the custom for a sermon to be delivered at the beginning and end of the proceedings. Knipperdollinck burst in upon the assembly in the middle of the discourse, crying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, holy is the Father, and we are a holy people!" As he said this, he began to dance in front of the King's throne, declaring that the preceding night it had been revealed to him that he was to play the part of court-

fool. He then began to perform the antics of a madman, prostrating himself before the throne, jumping up and down, throwing himself into all manner of gestures. He called upon one of the attendants with a halberd to follow him and strike down the godless. Knipperdollinck continued dancing till he fell over two of the benches on which the women were sitting, rolling over on the ground as one possessed. Rising to his feet, he declared that the Holy Ghost had passed through him, and proceeded to kiss the bystanders on the mouth, with the words: "Thou art holy, God hath made thee holy!" Jan, who had looked on in silent embarrassment, at last rose up, saying: "Dear Brethren and Sisters, let us praise and thank God and go home!" The multitude then dispersed after a remonstrance addressed by Knipperdollinck to the King and the singing of a hymn.

The next day there was again an assembly on the *Prinzipalmarkt.* On this occasion, it is related, Knipperdollinck advanced before Jan and seated himself on the throne in his stead, with the words: "It is I who of right should be King here, since it is I who have made thee what thou art." At this Bockelson was

enraged and went home. He subsequently returned, however, and resumed his place on the throne, which Knipperdollinck had now vacated. Having bidden Knipperdollinck to be silent, Jan addressed the people, saying: "Dear Brethren and Sisters, heed ye not the thing which Knipperdollinck hath said, for he is not in his right mind." He proceeded to deliver one of those eloquent discourses that had always won the heart of the people, who remained unaffected by what had happened in their loyalty to him. Jan had Knipperdollinck arrested. He was liberated after three days on begging pardon and averring that he had been beguiled by the devil, not knowing what he did.[1] (Gresbeck, *Bericht*, pp. 142—50).

A complete reconciliation between Bockelson

[1] Gresbeck hints at other causes for Bockelson's resentment, besides the ostensible one in question. He seems to suggest that Knipperdollinck was connected with a party among the Anabaptists in the town, who advocated the appointment of an additional king. "They would," he says, "have a worldly and spiritual king." "Many of these," he says, "were also seized and kept many days in durance. The same are Dutchmen and Frieslanders; had they been burghers or free-lances the King would have had them beheaded."

and Knipperdollinck seems to have been effected before many days were over, for shortly afterwards we hear of a triumphal procession of Jan through all the streets and open places of the town, when he was accompanied by his court and his full military retinue, horse and foot, with Knipperdollinck, in his earlier capacity of master of the ceremonies, taking a leading part. Everywhere the King of the New Jerusalem was greeted with enthusiasm by the whole population, the women especially distinguishing themselves by the ardour of their loyalty. As yet, in the late autumn and early winter of 1534, want of provisions had hardly made itself felt in Münster. The public tables were still fairly well supplied, and from time to time special feasts were given in the King's palace or in the open air in the cathedral close, now called by the faithful the Hill of Zion. Jan, with his artistic instincts, saw to it that the proceedings were accompanied by music and at times by song and dance as well. At intervals on these occasions a chapter of the Old Testament would be read by someone appointed for the purpose. Some of these functions, were kept up far into the night.

As showing the devotion of the people to the new King the following incident will serve. One day a crier was sent through the town to announce that the hour had come when the New Israel, under the leadership of its King, should go forth into the promised land, and that all should make themselves ready for their departure. As some ten thousand persons, two thousand men and eight thousand women, it is said, were assembled on the "Domhof" in obedience to the summons, Jan appeared in full regalia, accompanied by his court, and announced to the multitude that the hour had not yet come, that he had only wished to try their faith, and that he begged them now to be his guests at a joyful feast. Benches and tables were hastily made ready, and the whole concourse sat down to the rich fare provided. The King himself, with his Queen, and his court-functionaries served the people with their own hands. As soon as the feast was over, Jan rose up to address the people. "God," he said, "had relieved him of his dignity of King and he would now abdicate." Thereupon the ex-goldsmith, and now prophet, Dusentschur, in his turn rose up and declared that God had revealed to him

the command that their dear brother, Jan of Leyden, should continue King, an announcement which was accepted with acclamation by the people. Thus was Jan confirmed in his office by a kind of popular election. Jan now announced to those assembled that a divine revelation had enjoined him to send forth twenty-seven chosen men in the capacity of apostles. Dusentschur read the names and the places, amongst others, Soest, Osnabrück, Warendorf and Coesfeld. The apostles immediately departed as ordered. It is said that Jan ended this feast by the execution of a prisoner with his own hand, a statement that, coming as it does from hostile sources, may well be open to doubt.

The travesties of the Catholic cultus continued at intervals throughout the whole siege. Grotesque effigies of the Bishop, hung round with letters of indulgence, were popular. On one occasion, one of these figures was mounted on an old horse, to the tail of which a large parchment representing the agreement entered into by the Bishop with the town of Münster on February 14th, 1533, was attached, and the animal was then driven out of the city in the direction of the Bishop's camp. The soldiers hurried up to

ascertain who the intruder was, and on discovering the hoax, hewed the figure in pieces to the great amusement of the Anabaptist guards on the wall. Towards the end of the year 1534, famine began to make itself unmistakably manifest. The duty of the deacons to provide the daily meals became daily more difficult. Strong measures had to be taken to prevent the hoarding up of provisions by private individuals; it was stringently forbidden to bake or brew in private houses; the millers were prohibited from grinding corn for private persons. A house to house search was made for hidden food or drink, and concealment of the necessaries of life was visited with the severest penalties.

The hope of relief from the brethren outside in the other towns of Westphalia, and indeed as far off as Friesland and Holland, found expression in the revelations and visions, that formed part of the atmosphere of the Anabaptist world. Many of these emanated from Jan himself, others from the other prophets. One night, we are told, Jan ran barefoot through the streets and along the wall, crying: "Israel, rejoice, thy deliverance is near!" Words of encouragement from their King and leader always infused fresh confidence into

the impressionable population. Once the King actually made preparations for heading a sortie. He had all available sacks in the town brought together into the hands of the deacons, preparatory to taking them with himself and followers, hoping to return with them filled with corn and flour for the hungry population. A rumour as to this having reached the camp outside, the soldiers of the Bishop were not slow in casting jeers at the defenders of the ramparts, asking why Jan of Leyden delayed coming. He should only hurry, they said, and they would see to the filling of his sacks for him. But Jan's practical good sense kept him back in time from a project that, under the existing conditions, without a relieving force to co-operate with him, would have meant certain destruction.

The towers of the churches were now partially broken down and used as platforms for the planting of ordnance. The "Lambertikirche" alone of the principal churches remained untouched. Its lofty tower was used as the chief watchtower, from which an alarm was blown whenever a movement of the enemy in the direction of the city was observed. Some smaller ecclesiastical buildings were demolished and the materials

used for strengthening the fortifications. By the beginning of 1535 all the churches, streets and public places were renamed so as to obliterate all memory of Catholic times. To this end also. all Catholic festivals and observance days were done away with as such; the distinction between Sunday and week-day was likewise abolished on the same grounds. Work on the walls and in the trenches, and in collecting and carrying material for repairs in the defensive works, naturally occupied much of the time of the inhabitants. But their King Jan took steps to distract them as far as possible from dwelling on the miseries of their situation, by means of amusement and instruction combined in the shape of dramatic representations. For this purpose, the choir of the cathedral was transformed into a stage, somewhat after the manner adopted for the old Catholic mystery-plays of the earlier Middle Ages. Curtains were hung right across the nave, at the entrance of the choir.

Gresbeck has left an account of one of these Anabaptist mystery-plays. It represented the story of the rich man and Lazarus. "They began to play," says Gresbeck, "and played and made speech one with the other. When

the rich man had made a speech with Lazarus, three pipers, who stood by the stage, played a piece in three parts. Then the rich man spake again, and then the pipers played again, and so the play went through to the end. At the last came the devils and did fetch the rich man, body and soul, and did draw him behind the curtain. There was a great laughter in the cathedral and much merry talk." (Gresbeck, *Bericht*, p. 168.) In the above we have an illustration again of the powerful influence exercised by tradition and the intellectual atmosphere into which we have been born, even when we are with our conscious will engaged in a bitter protest, as we suppose, against that tradition and atmosphere. Jan of Leyden and his followers, so far as their conscious endeavours were concerned, aimed at destroying all vestige of the hated Catholic-Feudal system of society, against which they were ostensibly rebelling. Yet strangely enough, as it might seem, they could think of no form of dramatic representation more appropriate than something scarcely distinguishable from the old traditional mystery-play so familiar to the mediæval mind. Again, the pomp of the New Jerusalem, the importance,

attached to which may possibly have been suggested, as Kautsky has observed, from frequent readings of the Johannine Apocalypse, was through and through mediæval in character. The Middle Ages were always great in pageants, and the pageant-life of the Middle Ages had never attained such dimensions or such magnificence as it did when they were nearing their close during the earlier half of the sixteenth century. Even under the storm and stress of siege and hunger in Münster in 1535, we see the old careless, naive and joyous life of mediæval times still active. The true puritanical spirit, indirect outcome of the new conditions of life then indeed arising, but not as yet become dominant, only sporadically asserted itself. The difference is marked in this respect between the Anabaptists of Münster and the English Puritans of over a century later. So true is the commonplace that our minds run in grooves and that it takes a long time before we can free ourselves from our old habits of thought.

But in spite of amusements, in spite of visions, in spite of revelations of coming help, day by day as the new year 1535 advanced, the terrible ravages of hunger made themselves more and

more felt. At the same time, the Bishop's forces continued to draw an ever tightening cordon around the doomed city. All possible communication with the outer world was now cut off, and the hope of relief from outside grew daily fainter. The horses were now slaughtered for food. With the first indications of spring, an attempt was made to cultivate the not inconsiderable amount of garden and arable land within the walls. Münster is even to-day a town of orchards and market-gardens. The available land was divided into lots and distributed among the inhabitants for cultivation. But the result did not answer to expectation. Jan and the Preachers unceasingly exhorted the people to regard the present condition of famine in the light of a fast ordained by God, which it was the duty of the Saints to observe till the time of feasting should come again.

Up to this time no steps had been taken by the authorities to prevent people leaving the town. The forces of the Anabaptists had been, moreover, largely recruited by fugitives from the Bishop's camp. The King now resolved that it was time to regulate the departures. One of the Preachers, therefore, who appears to have

also acted as public crier, was told off to announce throughout the town, that for four days it should remain free to all to leave if they pleased, but that after the expiration of that time all those caught attempting to escape should be executed as traitors. During the four days, large numbers of men, women and children flocked to the *Rathhaus* to claim the promised escort to the outer ramparts. It was a terrible alternative that presented itself to the famished inhabitants in Münster. Death from hunger within the walls, or probable death at the hands of the Bishop's mercenaries without. Almost all those of an age to bear arms were seized as they neared the trenches of the besiegers and summarily put to death. Old men, women and children were left without shelter in the open field. The Bishop sought counsel of the Archbishop of Köln and the Prince-Bishop of Cleves, his allies, as to what course he should pursue. They told him to drive the fugitives back into the town. This was tried, but they unanimously refused to move, saying they preferred immediate death in the camp of the besiegers to death by starvation in Münster. At this, these unfortunate half-starved fugitives were arrested and the epis-

copal monster had a number of them executed; the remainder, mostly women and children, being interned in various towns of the bishopric.

Notwithstanding famine and siege, the faith of the leaders and of the bulk of the inhabitants of Münster seemed to be little affected. The belief in the ultimate victory over the whole world of the millennial kingdom inaugurated in Münster remained for the most part unimpaired. But Jan, with his practical sense, knowing that disaffection existed in the town and tended to increase with the growth of the famine and the apparent hopelessness of the situation, bethought himself of a plan of placing the defence of the gates in the hands of persons upon whom he could thoroughly rely. Whether he had any special reasons for distrusting any of the existing defenders we know not. But the defence of the gates was obviously a matter of prime importance for the safety of the town. It only required a single act of treachery on the part of the commander of one of the gates for the city to be hopelessly lost. It was therefore only natural and wise that such a post of special confidence should be occupied by persons of

whose fidelity the King had personal assurance. Accordingly, under the pretext of choosing betimes the twelve "dukes," as they were called, or governors, among whom the kingdoms of the earth were subsequently to be divided, subject to the headship of their divinely-appointed King, Jan decided to carry out an important plan of reorganisation in the defence. To gain popular support for the measure and to confer more indisputable authority for the new officers, it was determined that the latter should be chosen by a suffrage of the Brethren. On the appointed day, therefore, all the adult inhabitants of Münster, men and women, were ordered to the gate belonging to the particular ward of the city in which they resided. After one of the preachers had here held a service, voting papers were distributed, upon which each person was to write the name of the Brother he wished to see fill the office of "duke." This being done, all the voting papers were collected into an urn by the royal councillor who directed the proceeding at each of the places appointed. An attendant page thrust his hand into the urn, and drew out, haphazard, one of the voting papers which he handed to the councillor. The latter

then read out the name supposed to be written thereon, the bearer of which he thereupon proclaimed the duke appointed to take over the command of the defence at the particular gate in question. The reader will see that the election was not by majority-vote, but by a process purporting to be a kind of mixture of democracy and chance, or, as the Anabaptists doubtless believed it, divine Providence. It has been suggested, not without reason, that the name announced by the councillor who was functioning was not necessarily the one that was written on the paper handed to him by the boy; but one that had been previously decided upon by Jan and his trusted councillors. It is, in fact, not improbable that a deception of this kind was practised, but if so, it was a deception for which it must be admitted there was considerable excuse, in view of the vital importance of the issues that hung upon the election. An injudicious choice might have meant the speedy betrayal of the town and all within it to the hordes of the Bishop's free-lances, thirsting as they were for blood and plunder.

The proceeding accomplished, Jan himself on horseback, attired in his kingly robes, made a

tour of the twelve gates, and at each one, solemnly and with a ceremonial customary in the New Jerusalem on public occasions, inaugurated the newly chosen duke in the office to which he was called—at first in the defence of Münster and later as vicegerent of the King of Zion in the government of the millennial monarchy. This was followed by a feast at which all the dukes had places of honour with the King and his councillors. Afterwards, we are told, the guests danced "each with his own wife." The proceedings concluded with the King presenting each duke with a silken band embroidered with the most costly gold, which each wore round his neck. These silken bands were hung with gold and silver coins. The election of the dukes meant a complete change in the personnel of the officers at each gate. Every duke chose for himself a lieutenant to act as his representative. The latter in his turn chose a quartermaster. These three were supreme at their own gate and the section of the defensive works allotted to it.

But no reorganisation of the defence could finally save the city. Famine and the superior force of the besiegers rendered a prolonged

resistance impossible. The numbers in the town were gradually reduced by starvation and the diseases accompanying want of food, and by flight, for in the last part of the siege this happened daily. The usual state of things in a besieged and hunger-stricken city obtained in Münster. According to Gresbeck everything that had life was eaten, dogs, cats, rats, mice, etc. Dark suggestions of cannibalism were as usual not wanting, but Gresbeck is honest enough to admit that he never saw any evidence of the latter. In the course of the month of May, large numbers of women left the city together with nearly all the children, amongst them fourteen [1] out of the fifteen wives of Jan of Leyden, the one remaining being the Queen and late widow of Matthys. It was necessary to limit the population as far as possible to those engaged in the work of the defence. Even then the suffering of the city was great enough.

It is necessary now to say a few words anent the charge of bloodthirstiness commonly brought by historians against the Münster Anabaptists.

[1] This statement by a hostile contemporary witness disposes of the story of the execution by Jan of one of these women, Elisabetha Wandscherer, for wishing to leave the town.

The charge is based on the fact of sundry executions having taken place in the city during the siege. As usual, reactionaries have set up for the Anabaptists of Münster, conducting the defence of a beleaguered town in the 16th century and at death-grips with a pitiless enemy, a supererogatory standard of mildness and humanity, which the governing classes they champion would not under normal conditions attempt to attain. When, of course, they can show that the Münsterites did not come up to it, they affect to be staggered with horror. The Anabaptists had arrived at the supreme power in Münster in February, 1534, in a perfectly legal manner. Franz von Waldeck had thereupon made war against the city, at the same time continuously murdering in cold blood any Anabaptists that fell into his hands. A portion of this sect—which, as we have seen in former chapters of this work, notwithstanding its doctrine of non-resistance to evil consistently carried out and hence its ultra-peaceable character, had been for years the victim of the most fiendish persecution—had at length resolved upon vigorous measures of self-defence, and as fortune would have it, had come into possession of a

strongly fortified town against which war had immediately been levied by its persecutors as representing the existing order of society. All knew that it was a case of life and death and that the capture of the city meant their extermination. Under these circumstances, no reasonable person can wonder that measures of exceptional severity had to be adopted and carried out against traitors and all whose acts militated against the safety of the town. Executions there undoubtedly were within the walls of Münster at the hands of the Anabaptist authorities. Of the circumstances of most of these we are ignorant, but as to those cases of which we have information, afforded it must be remembered exclusively by hostile witnesses, it is plain that we have to do with either acts of overt treachery or at least such as seriously menaced order within the town itself, on the maintenance of which the general safety so much depended. These were certainly inflicted without regard to rank or sex, for the followers of Jan of Leyden were no respecters of persons.

The executions, unfortunately, though not unnaturally, increased as the famine increased

and the hope of succour from without died away. As might be expected, the temptation to half-concealed disaffection and to open treachery rose with the conditions mentioned. During the last month of the siege the executions were most numerous, although the incredible statement of one account, that on June 3rd fifty-two persons suffered, may well be doubted. In one respect, certainly, even in this connection, it must be admitted that the much maligned sectaries showed themselves superior to their time. We do not hear of the torture being inflicted before the condemnation, as was usually the case elsewhere at that period, whilst the modes of death themselves were exclusively those sanctioned by the conscience of the nineteenth century. The only forms of execution practised by the Anabaptists in Münster were hanging, shooting, and beheading. Partisans of the dominant classes of that age may well be invited to compare the, for the period, comparatively humane conduct of the Anabaptists with the bestial blood-lust of their enemies.

It remains to sum up briefly the nature of the institutions of the New Israel before concluding the present chapter. Of these the most

notorious are the so-called communism that was established and the new marriage law, permitting, and in some cases even enjoining, polygamy for the saints. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, communism in a mediæval sense (that is, communism in the economic product as distinguished from communism in the means of production) formed an undercurrent, so to say, in all the forms of Anabaptism and was in various parts a recognised institution long before Jan Bockelson and the leaders of Münster appeared upon the scene. Free views of the marriage relation were, as we have seen also, occasionally to be met with among the earlier adherents of the movement. But, in both cases, the practical application of these doctrines was primarily determined by the peculiar local conditions obtaining in Münster during the siege. The communism, for example, was never complete, but was only, as Kautsky has pointed out, carried as far as the exigencies of the moment rendered it desirable. The confiscation of private property for the commonweal did not, for a long time, extend beyond money and the precious metals, a plentiful supply of which was necessary for defraying the expenses

of sending out missionaries, and otherwise maintaining intercourse, such as it was, with the outer world, as well as for inducing as many as possible of the Bishop's free-lances to desert and enter the service of the defence.

Later on, as famine began to make itself felt, and clothes began to wear out, private food stores, together with superfluous wardrobes, were also confiscated for the general use. The wealth of the religious houses, a by no means inconsiderable factor in Münster, was of course secularised or "municipalised" when they were abolished by the new order of things, after which, as generally occurred, their inmates abandoned them of their own accord to join the Anabaptist community. The same happened to the goods of hostile burghers who had fled. It is possible also that guild-property as such was regarded as available for public purposes.

How far the common meals started at an early period of the siege extended to all the inhabitants is doubtful; that the whole community on special occasions sat down to a common meal in the open air is clear. But various indications would seem to show that, as regards every-day life, the public meals were mainly

confined to those actively engaged on the walls and in the trenches, the houses set apart for them being situated as close as possible to the gates. In these common meals women as well as men took part, for the Anabaptist women were amongst the most active in the work of defence. It is plain that the private household, with the private meals held therein, was not abolished as an institution. This comes out in the matter of the confiscation of the private food stores. We hear also of rations being served out to private households. The common table of each town-ward was, of course, open to all the inhabitants of the ward, but there is no reason to suppose that there was any compulsion as to attendance. It is probable, however, that during the last few months of the siege, when food was becoming scarce, little was obtainable except at the public tables.

Private property and even inheritance was never, as such, formally abolished in Münster. So much is evident by the regulations drawn up at various times during the siege, which have been preserved mainly by the hostile witness Kerssenbroick. One of these, the work of the twelve Elders, has it: "Should any man,

by the providence of God, be shot or otherwise fall asleep in the Lord, none shall venture to keep such one's goods for himself, whether arms, garments, or whatsoever they may be; but he shall bring it before the sword-bearer, Knipperdollinck, who shall lay it before the Elders to the end that by them it may be adjudged to the true heirs." Again, one of a series of twenty-four articles drawn up by Jan of Leyden in January, 1535, provides that whilst no one of his own initiative shall appropriate booty captured from the enemy, but shall surrender it to the proper authorities, yet the latter may give him a portion of it, which he is free to use as he likes. Other articles of this code whilst strictly forbidding buying or selling, also enjoin fair dealings in the exchange and barter that had taken its place. A curious regulation is the appointment of certain craftsmen, who had to be exempt from the work of defence in order that they might labour at their craft for the common benefit of the new house of Israel. Thus two master-shoemakers, with their six journeymen, were to provide shoes for all the community. In a similar way, tailors were appointed, and blacksmiths to make—keys! The

allusions to masters and journeymen in these regulations indicate that the Anabaptists' communism, as practised in Münster, involved no serious breach with the then current conditions of industrial life. The disciples of Matthys and Bockelson, although doubtless in theory communists in the mediæval sense of the word, were unable under the conditions of a beleaguered town, where everything was subordinate to the emergencies of the moment, to undertake any systematic application of their doctrines.

As regards the question of the sexual arrangements of the Saints in Münster, it is only fair to take into account the doctrines concerning marriage contained in the "*Bekenntniss des Globens und Lebens der gemein Criste zu Münster*," where, in the section dealing with marriage, the conventional Christian doctrine on the subject is emphasized to the fullest extent. Marriage is proclaimed to be a sacrament of the highest order, typical of Christ and the Church, etc., with a due wealth of quotations from the New Testament. At the same time, the charges of debauchery that had been brought against the Saints by their enemies are indignantly repudiated as foul slanders. Speaking

of this, the apology goes on to say: "We leave vengeance to God, for know we not that how long soever we are fought against with blasphemous lies and with might, and the godless pour out the measure of their evil doing, yea, even though we suffer according to the flesh, yet shall the truth conquer in our little congregation, as Christ saith, Luke XII: Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Everything points to the fact that originally the Münster Anabaptists, like the enormous majority of their co-religionists elsewhere, professed and practised asceticism in sexual as in other matters. The modification that subsequently took place was of a peculiar character. Had it been in the direction of a community of wives or of free love, it would have had its parallel in certain previous phases of mediæval Christian communism, for instance, the "Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit," the heretical Hussite sect of the "Adamites," etc. But as it is, it stands unique in the history of mediæval socio-religious movements. The contract, or sacrament, as it was conceived, of marriage, once entered upon, was no less sacred and

binding after the introduction of polygamy, than it had been under the previous monogamy. The difference consisted solely in the lawfulness of having more wives than one. In the twenty-eight articles, promulgated by Jan of Leyden, in January, 1535, months after polygamy had been introduced, we find the same severity against adultery and all forms of illicit sexual intercourse as in the edict of the twelve Elders already alluded to, which was enacted before the introduction of the new marriage system. That marriages concluded before re-baptism should be regarded as null and void was only a logical deduction from the idea of a new life entered into by joining the community of the Saints. The explanation of the polygamy of the Münsterites is undoubtedly the one suggested in an earlier part of the present chapter.

On the town falling into the hands of the Anabaptists, a large emigration of the wealthy inhabitants took place, as we know. But it was mainly the master of the house who departed, in these cases, with perhaps such of his sons as were grown up, leaving behind the female section of the household, as a rule a tolerably large one in the Middle Ages. The average

population of the town of Münster in those times is estimated at fifteen thousand. The number present within the walls at any time during the siege could not have exceeded, according to all accounts, from twelve to thirteen thousand, whilst some statements make it less. The number of the male inhabitants is reckoned by Gresbeck at two thousand, of which fifteen hundred are mentioned as capable of bearing arms. There were, of course, losses and gains in the adult male population—losses from military operations and gains from prisoners brought in, and from deserters from the Bishop's camp, who joined the defenders. Allowing for this, however, the difference in the numerical proportion of women to men could not have been less than three or four to one and was probably much more. Given such a state of things, with an Anabaptist code of morals prevailing and strictly enforced in a town for months cut off from all intercourse with the outer world, any reasonable man can see that an untenable situation from the sexual point of view must be created, which could only be remedied either by a serious relaxation of the sexual code itself, or else by an enlargement of the moral and religious sanctions as regards

marriage. The latter was the course chosen by Jan of Leyden and his colleagues. An almost exclusive study of the Bible and the dominant idea that absorbed the Anabaptists of living over again the life of the Old Testament Israel, as they conceived it, rendered the notion of a plurality of wives plausible by its accordance with the household of the patriarchal society depicted in the Pentateuch. It may be true that Jan Matthys probably, and certainly Jan Bockelson, did not in all respects share the ultra-ascetic views of some amongst the Anabaptists, any more than they shared the belief in the doctrine of non-resistance so prevalent in the sect; but the evidence shows that even these leaders accepted the strict doctrines on sexual morality general among the Brethren. The biblical-patriarchal view taken of the marriage relation is further shown by the authority vested in the husband over his wives and household generally. This point of view comes out strongly in a pamphlet published by Rothmann in October, 1534, as spokesman of the Münster Saints.

It should not be forgotten by the conventional historian, who overflows with indignation at the wickedness of the Münsterites in instituting poly-

gamy, that such accredited representatives of orthodox Protestant respectability as Luther and Melanchthon had declared polygamy to be not contrary to Christianity. This, it is true, was said by the distinguished "reformers" in question in order to curry favour with Henry VIII. of England and the Landgraf of Hesse respectively, and they, together with their patrons, would have wished doubtless to keep it, as Kautsky has suggested, as a reserve doctrine for the convenience of the great ones of the earth on emergency. But their arguments which showed that, whilst polygamy was avowedly permitted by the Mosaic law, it had never been forbidden by any precept or injunction of Christ or the Apostles, must, to the Anabaptist mind, have held equally good when applied in a democratic sense.

The ground of the innovation introduced by the prophets and preachers of Münster, it must, moreover, not be forgotten, was economic as well as sexual. Large numbers of women had been left deserted in the town and had to be protected and provided for by the new regulation. All such women came into the household of one of the Brethren. In fact, it would seem

that there were a certain number among the so-called wives under the new ordinance who were such in name only and for whom the new relation was avowedly merely one of protectional maintenance. For the original edict, it must be remembered, provided that no woman, old or young, should remain outside the marital relation, although she was free to choose the man she would have. The original edict, however, did not remain in full force, being modified more than once. The domestic disturbances caused by the new arrangements, which were first met by the imprisonment of the recalcitrant women in one of the evacuated religious houses prepared for the purpose, and even in two or three cases, it is stated, by executions, were later on dealt with by a liberal application of a divorce law, which had been enacted to this end. Towards the close of the siege, the majority of the female population had left the town.

In concluding this chapter, we must once more repeat that, in considering the conduct of the Anabaptist authorities during their lease of power in Münster, it is above all things necessary to remember the altogether exceptional conditions with which they were confronted.

Münster was from beginning to end a beleaguered town, for the greater part of the time cut off almost completely from all communication with the outer world; the population was exceptionally disproportioned as regards the sexes, and was composed, besides, largely of heterogeneous elements from various quarters, united only in the one faith. Last, but not least, it was not even an ordinary siege that was in question, but one which all knew to mean victory or the most terrible of deaths.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THE PROPAGANDA OUTSIDE MÜNSTER.

ANABAPTISM outside Münster continued to make rapid progress during the siege. It is true that there was a continuance of the two cross-currents characterising the movement throughout the north-western territories, that of the earlier Hoffmannites, or Melchiorites, who still adhered to the doctrine of non-resistance, and that of Matthys and Bockelson, which not merely conceded the right of self-defence, but proclaimed that the millennial kingdom was to be established by the sword of the Saints themselves. From the spring of 1534 the latter had, however, obtained for the nonce a decisive predominance. The acquisition of Münster by the movement was the turning-point. But the prophets at the head of affairs in Münster were by no means behind-hand in missionary zeal. Not content to let things take their course, they at once began sending out agitators throughout Westphalia, the Netherlands and the Lower Rhine

generally. In February 1534, Heinrich Roll and Jakob von Osnabrück went forth. Their main object in this case was to induce the Brethren to come to Münster, alleging that all Christians who entered Münster would have houses and beds placed at their disposal, that if private house-accommodation should not suffice, room would be found for them in the dispossessed religious houses. They predicted a terrible vengeance on the godless before Easter, and that the tenth man should not remain alive except in Münster itself, which, they said, was the city of the Lord and the New Jerusalem, where the Lord would provide for his own and all should have enough. Jakob, however, a hoofsmith by trade, was soon arrested and brought to Düsseldorf.

Numbers of letters were also sent out from those who joined the Münster community to relations and friends, urging them to repent of their sins and come into the fold of the Saints. Rothmann himself wrote enthusiastically to his friend Heinrich von Tongern, stating that all the things predicted by the prophets were being fulfilled. Heinrich was to persuade all he could to come and bring all their gold

and silver with them. Manifestoes of a general character were also not wanting, one of these, (quoted by Keller, "*Wiedertäufer*," p. 148) after urging the commandment of the prophets that all should rise up and join the Saints in the New Jerusalem, proceeds: "Let none concern themselves as to husband or wife that are unbelieving, neither shall ye take such with you, nor unbelieving children who are disobedient and not under the rod, for such profit naught in the congregation of God." After enjoining those who would come that they should encumber themselves with nothing save such money, clothes and food as were necessary for the journey, together with such arms as they might possess, the author of this appeal, who signs himself "Emanuel," concludes: "Come all together a half mile from Hazelt at the Berg Kloster on the 24th day of March, towards mid-day. Be prudent in all things! Ye shall not come before the day named, but also not later, nor shall anyone be tarried for after the time appointed. Let none neglect to come. If any remain behind, I will be guiltless of his blood." The manifesto entitled "Confessions of both Sacraments," issued in October, 1533,

by Rothmann and the other preachers, was also widely circulated in the neighbouring territory during the ensuing years.

But more important than this was the pamphlet or small book, published by Rothmann a year later, in October, 1534, entitled "Restitution, or the Setting up anew of just and wholesome Christian Doctrine, Faith and Life." The world, declares Rothmann, has fallen from the truth, in that it has been misled by the papacy and by the so-called Evangelical teachers, but the time is at hand when Christ shall restore the world lost in sin, and this restitution or restoration of the world shall take place by means of the lowly and unlearned. "Look therefore," he exclaims, "at that which was begun by Erasmus, Luther and Zwingli, but behold in Melchior, Jan Matthys, and here in our brother Jan of Leyden, in them who are quite unlearned, as this world counts learning, the truth has been gloriously made manifest." In this work, which may be taken as an official pronouncement of the views of the Münster prophets and their followers, Rothmann proceeds, after expounding the doctrines of Anabaptism, to justify the ordinances the prophets had issued for the actual govern-

ment of the new house of Israel. The Old Testament is represented as in no wise superseded, all its institutions remaining in their full force, as ideal forms of government and society, as much as ever. Christ is represented as King of Israel and of the whole world in a literal sense. Three chapters are devoted to the somewhat easy task of justifying polygamy from Holy Writ. Much space is devoted to refuting the dogmas of the hated "Evangelicals" followers of Luther and Zwingli—justification by faith alone, predestination, etc., etc. Other chapters expound and justify, in the usual way by biblical quotation, the doctrine of the community of goods. Others again, more immediately important than all, emphasize the duty of the Saints to destroy the godless with the sword.

The book had indeed for its main object, to move the outside brethren to organise themselves for the relief of Münster. As a further inducement to this end, the joys of the people of God in the New Jerusalem are described. Thus in Chapter XII. we read: "Not alone have we placed our goods in the hands of the deacons and lived thereon according to our need, but with

one heart and one mind do we praise God in Christ and are well disposed to do each other all manner of service." "All therefore which had heretofore served to self-seeking and to possession, such as buying and selling, labouring to procure money, due or usury, even eating and drinking with the unbelieving, oppressing the poor, that is the using our brethren and our neighbours that they shall work for us, that thereby we may fatten ourselves on their labour —all these things and what further might destroy the love between us, in the love of Christ and the brethren, is quite fallen out of use by us, and, as we know, God shall utterly root out all such abominations. Therefore will we rather go to our death than again return thereunto, for we know that with such sacrifices the Lord is well-pleased. Know ye that no Christian or saint may please God who doth not in this wise hold all things in common, or at the least is in his heart well-disposed to do so." The conclusion treats of the wonders wrought by God in the defence of Münster already, and winds up with an exhortation to the brethren to gird on the sword and undertake forthwith the glorious work of the final deliverance of the New Zion.

The foregoing book was followed, at an interval of two months by another smaller pamphlet known as "The little book of Vengeance," which appeared in December 1534. This was also from the pen of Rothmann. Vengeance, it says, is at hand and will soon burst upon the powers of this world. After it is accomplished shall appear the new heavens and the new earth. "Dear brethren, the time of vengeance hath come upon us, God hath raised up the promised David and armed him to vengeance and punishment on Babylon with its people. Therefore, dear brethren, arm yourselves to the battle, not alone with the apostle's weapons of patience in suffering, but also with the glorious armour of David, to vengeance, to the end that ye may, with God's power and help, utterly root out the might of Babylon and all the godless world." The pamphlet ends: "Look to it, therefore, dear brethren, that ye hasten to lay hold on this matter with earnestness and that ye betake yourselves in such great numbers as in your power lies to come under the banner of God. God, the Lord of Hosts, awaken in your hearts the power of His Spirit, arm you and His whole Israel according to His will, to His

praise and to the increase of His Kingdom. Amen."

Urbanus Rhegius answered the Anabaptists' literature in a work which he probably wrote at the end of 1534, and which was directly intended to counteract the spread of the propaganda in Osnabrück, where matters were beginning at this time to look serious. It is entitled "*De Restitvone Regni Israelitici*" and pretends to refute Anabaptism in a hundred and five articles or theses. Amongst other things Urbanus characterises as "a foolish and godless fable," that hitherto had been the time of endurance, but that now was the time of vengeance. "For," says he, "naught but dreams of such prophets and naught but a chatter contradicting the Scriptures are the three worlds, which they have divised to the end that they might establish their error, and of which the first was the age of sin from the creation of the world until the flood, the second the age of persecution and the Cross until our time, and the third the age of restitution and vengeance, in which all the godless are to be destroyed by the Anabaptists and a bodily kingdom of Christ established by them. This is an invention of the Devil to

tear the sword from the hands of the Authority set up by God," etc. (*Bouterwek*, I. pp. 43-48.) It is doubtful whether this work, to which Luther contributed a foreword, had the effect of converting a single Anabaptist from the error of his ways, although doubtless the congregation of the Lutheran faithful derived considerable edification from the learned theologian's confident refutation of the enemy.

Already early in the year 1534 various districts of Holland were strongly permeated with Anabaptism. Amsterdam was regarded by the Anabaptist saints as the centre of their creed in the Netherland countries, but Leyden, the Hague, Haarlem, and other places had considerable numbers of brethren within their walls. Deventer especially distinguished itself as the hope of the "Children of God," the Bürgermeister himself having joined the sectaries. In Brabant, it is stated in a letter addressed from Antwerp to Erasmus of Rotterdam, there was scarcely a village or town where the torch of insurrection did not secretly glow. It is significant that the writer attributes the success of the new movement among the masses to the communistic doctrines involved in it.

In these countries also we find the same phenomena of religious exaltation, amounting in some cases to undoubted madness, as are recorded of the votaries of the movement by Kessler in St. Gallen, and which we know were to a greater or less extent its accompaniment everywhere. Thus in Amsterdam we hear of a meeting of seven men and five women in a private house belonging to Jan Siewerts, a cloth merchant, who was on a journey. One Dirk Snyder filled the role of prophet at this meeting, which appears to have been held at 3 a. m. Snyder lay down flat in the middle of the room for some moments, during which all were seized with fear and imagined that the house trembled. He at length rose up, and addressing one of those present, said: "I have beheld God in His glory and have spoken with Him. I have been ravished up to heaven and been carried down to hell, where I have seen all things. I tell thee the judgment-day approacheth and thou hast been damned for ever." The man addressed fell on his knees and cried: "Father, have mercy on me." Dirk after a pause then changed his tone, saying: "The Father hath pity on thee and hath adopted thee

as his child, so that thy sins are forgiven." The next night the same persons, together with others, again assembled in the house. After preaching and praying had been carried on for four hours, the prophet Dirk proceeded to take off his clothes, which he threw in the fire that was burning on the hearth. Standing in the midst quite naked, he commanded the others, men and women, to do likewise, saying that all that came from the earth must be sacrificed in fire to God. He was strictly obeyed by all. Meanwhile the landlady of the lodging, probably alarmed by the fumes of burning garments, entered the room, whereupon the prophet, enjoined her in imperative tones to follow the example of the rest of the assembly. She too obeyed without a murmur. The prophet then ordered all to follow him out into the street, where they walked in procession, Dirk at their head, crying: "Woe! woe! the vengeance of God, the heavenly Father, is upon you!" The citizens roused from their slumbers by the noise, repaired in arms to the market-place, under the impression that a hostile force had gained possession of the town. On seeing the Anabaptist fanatics, they arrested them all, save one woman

who succeeded in escaping, but they steadily refused to put on clothes, alleging that truth was naked, and that its apostles must be so also. In this condition they reached the *Rathhaus*, where they were confined. Meanwhile flames broke out from the room where lay the burning clothes, and the door was broken open by the town authorities with blows from axes.

Next day, a house-to-house visitation was made, and many Anabaptists were seized, a respite of some days being granted them to enable those who would recant to do so and obtain a certificate from their priest. After the time was expired, the utmost rigour of punishment awaited them. Those concerned in the affair were all executed, with the exception of the one woman who has been mentioned as having escaped. The landlady of the apartment where the scene took place was hanged at her own door.

In February 1534, one of the brethren, a former priest, was arrested with others and put to the torture. Whilst on the rack he confessed as to facts connected with the spread of the movement and as to its meeting-places, a confession that cost the Anabaptists dear, as it

gave the authorities the clues they wanted to serve them for the organization of a thorough-going campaign of persecution. Sweeping columns, averaging some twenty men each, were sent to scour the country districts. Whoever was in the least suspect was at once arrested. So great was the apprehension of resistance that the arrests were generally made at night, many being dragged from their beds. On the 20th March, 1534, the towns of Deventer, Campen and Zwolle received an Imperial order to adopt energetic measures to root out the dangerous elements they were harbouring. Hundreds of persons were arrested in these towns alone on a charge of Anabaptism. But throughout Holland the fiercest persecution was soon raging. By the end of March five hundred persons were in the dungeons of Utrecht and its neighbourhood. The summons by letter, broadsheet and messenger to come to the relief of Münster met with a ready response. Thirty shiploads of Anabaptists left the neighbourhood of Amsterdam on the 21st March, 1534, for the relief of "Zion." They were well supplied with weapons and ammunition. In all there were nearly three thousand men, besides numerous women and

children, and they had four banners. This was coincident with the great pilgrimage along the highways leading from Dutch territories to the famous Westphalian town. Numbers of the pilgrims were seized by the sweeping columns in small companies as they came in sight. As for the ships, a more sudden and cruel fate awaited them and their occupants. Five were scuttled and sunk, all on board being drowned. Of the prisoners taken alive, those supposed to be the leaders were executed and their heads fixed on poles along the highway, whilst their trunks were fastened to the executioner's wheel in the public places of the towns. The women and children were in most cases sent to their homes.

On the 25th December, 1534, an *émeute* took place at Deventer, that stronghold of Anabaptism. The project seems to have been well planned, but was betrayed beforehand and therefore immediately crushed by the authorities. Three of the leading conspirators, among them the son of the Bürgermeister, were beheaded on the market-place. In January a real or imaginary conspiracy at Leyden was unearthed, the object of which was alleged to be to destroy the city

of Leyden by fire. This conspiracy is stated to have been organised in the old house formerly occupied by Jan of Leyden. In any case the house was used for meetings of the Anabaptist body and sustained a siege at the hands of the authorities. Although the brethren seem to have made a valiant resistance, they were overpowered eventually by the forces of "order" and all put to death, the men being beheaded and the women drowned, according to the distinction usually made at the time in the mode of execution of the sexes. Bockelson's first wife is said to have been one of those executed.

In almost every town in Holland, Brabant, Flanders and the other territories of these north-western regions there were communities of Anabaptist saints, and in all of them at this time sympathy with the Westphalian Zion was keen and often practical. Ships were sent from other places besides Amsterdam, filled with men and munitions of war, round the north of Holland with a view of reaching Münster from that direction. But almost all were intercepted.

One of the emissaries from Munster, Jan van Geelen, who at the end of 1534 had originally

been sent to Strasburg, appears early in 1535 again in the north-west. Towards the end of February we find him in Friesland, conducting a body of his co-religionists, some three hundred in all, including women and children, who were on their way to the Haven of the saints. On the 28th February they were caught up by one of the flying columns already alluded to as having been instituted at the behest of the Imperial authorities. The leader escaped, but the bulk of the rank and file were executed, the men by beheading and the women by drowning. Van Geelen next appears in Amsterdam, where he seems to have been connected with a plot for seizing the city. Early in May, the town-hall (*Stadhuis*) was suddenly attacked by a body of Anabaptist rioters, but the Town Council was able to summon a force of well-to-do burghers. A regular battle ensued, in the course of which one of the Bürgermeisters lost his life. The conflict lasted many hours, the Anabaptists having succeeded in gaining possession of the municipal headquarters, though apparently not without great loss on their own side. Reduced to twenty-five in number, they held the building valiantly against the party of "order" outside, into whose ranks a

continuous hail of bullets fell. At last, by dint of cannon and scaling-ladders the place was captured, but only twelve Anabaptists were taken alive. These were executed with diabolical cruelty shortly afterwards, while at the same time the bodies of their slain comrades were hanged by the feet to gallows erected in the central Market-place. Van Geelen himself, who sought refuge in the tower of the Stadhuis, was killed by a shot from one of the pieces of ordnance deployed on the Market-place.

Meanwhile, at Bolswaert, in Friesland, on the 28th February, the sectaries made themselves masters of an old monastery. More than three hundred persons took part in the affair. The monks were driven off and the building sacked. Next day the Governor of the Province, Jöris Schenk, came and besieged the insurgents. Negotiations followed; he promised them pardon if they would lay down their arms and deliver up the ringleaders, but they refused, being resolved to live and die together. The siege that ensued was terrific; with six cannon the Governor made four assaults, but was beaten back each time. On April 7th, however, they were overcome. Not more than sixty were found

alive, with seventy women and children. All the prisoners were taken to Leuwarde, where a number were sentenced to death.

Anabaptism was introduced into the town of Liége about the year 1533, by a glass-maker whose name is unknown. In Maestricht, Heinrich von Tongern, having been driven from the territory of Jülich towards the end of 1532 for Anabaptist doctrines, had taken up his residence in the house of a shoemaker. Here also a considerable congregation was recruited among the journeymen and poorer handicraftsmen. At the beginning of September 1534, a guildmaster, and a former Carmelite monk calling himself Hendrik van Hilversum, the latter being spoken of as the leader of the Maestricht Anabaptists, were arrested. This Hendrik was no other than Heinrich Roll, late of Münster, who before he came to Maestricht had been sowing the seed in Wesel. The wandering envoys from Münster were everywhere active throughout the winter and the following spring, strengthening old ties and instituting new ones, in the hope, vain as it proved, of organising a powerful force of enthusiasts to relieve Münster now so hardly pressed by the Bishop's army.

In some towns it was resolved by the City Councils to order lists of strangers to be handed in day by day after the closing of the gates, while in many cases a strict curfew was introduced. The Duke of Cleves, finding his own and all the surrounding territories honeycombed with Anabaptist associations, holding everywhere open conventicles or secret meetings, ordered the authorities of each district to report the exact number of all landlords of places of public entertainment in their jurisdiction, and to compel them, under severe penalties, to report every meeting that came to their knowledge at which the rights of the existing spiritual and temporal powers were called in question. This edict, issued on the 3rd of April, 1534, was supplemented towards the end of the year by one signed jointly by the Duke and the Archbishop Hermann of Köln. In this, death without hope of pardon was made the punishment for rebaptism. It was circulated early in the new year throughout all the domains of the Duke Johann. Not alone the local authorities were compelled to see to its being made known, but the clergy were ordered to read it from the pulpit at intervals of four weeks.

The larger towns along the Rhine were not without their contingent of the new sectaries. Thus even in strictly Catholic Köln, in the autumn of 1534, we are told there were no fewer than seven hundred adherents of the new sect. In November, a number of executions took place in consequence of a warning issued in September by the Archbishop to the town authorities.

Turning back again to Westphalia, we find all the smaller towns showing indications of following the example of the chief town. Warendorf was ripe for the advent of the Münster emissaries in October 1534, but here the Bishop, by vigorous action, succeeded in suppressing the movement, executing the Münsterite apostles together with their leading followers. The town itself was humiliated and had to place itself at the Bishop's mercy. The same thing occurred in Coesfeld, where the inhabitants were compelled to surrender Jan of Leyden's missionaries to the Bishop's officers, by whom they were cruelly put to death, having been carried in chains as a terrible warning throughout other towns of the diocese.

The Münsterites were particularly concerned to win over the town of Soest. This was a Hanseatic town possessing considerable liberties,

but it was not free of the Empire, being subject to the jurisdiction of the Prince-Bishop. The prophet Dusentschur, who had drawn up the list of towns from which help might be expected, had placed Soest at the head of it. His hopes were based on the strong position of the Democratic party there. Reformation disturbances began there early in 1533. The abolition of the religious houses was demanded, together with the handing over of the buildings themselves to the Soest burghers. A secret league of the poorer citizens was formed against the *Rath* and the guild-masters who stood by the *Rath*. The latter succeeded in suppressing the movement and sentenced the leaders to death. Two thousand of the party of "order," fully armed, occupied the Market-place. The "common man," however, the poorer handicraftsmen, the journeymen, and the town proletarians flocked thither and raised a great outcry. The women were specially conspicuous by their lamentations. One "honourable pious woman," as she is termed, gave utterance, it is said, to a remarkable prophecy. Whilst the condemned were passing by, she cried out to them: "Dear friends, be content! God doth no wrong. Ye

are not yet dead, and it shall yet be well with you!" Manfully, with head erect, they went to their fate, averring that they would live and die by the Gospel. The first victim knelt down to await the blow of the executioner. The blow fell, but only wounded the prisoner, who was able to spring to his feet and wrench the axe from the executioner's hand. When this was seen, a violent disturbance arose and the authorities dared not proceed with the executions. Next day, the City Council-room was stormed by five hundred men and women demanding pardon for the prisoners, which the *Rath* thought it prudent to accord.

In November 1534, the Elector Johann Friedrich of Saxony, who was conducting military operations for the Bishop round Soest, was present in the town, taking steps against the spread of the movement, and on the 17th December the City Council at his instigation issued a severe mandate, not only against Anabaptist themselves, but also against all harbouring such in their houses. The man who originally introduced Anabaptism into Soest was a certain Johann von Campen, a disciple of Melchior

Hoffmann. He was an enthusiastic propagandist and worked with Hoffmann when he was in Holstein and also in Lübeck and Brunswick. As the Münster emissaries, prophet Dusentschur at their head, entered the town on the 8th October, 1534, they are said to have conducted themselves as if they were already masters of the place, openly preaching insurrection. The *Rath* repeatedly requested the Munsterites to leave, but received only defiant answers. At last, the heads of the Guilds and other leading personages were called together to the *Rathhaus*, and took oath to stand by the governing Council in the action it was about to take against the unwelcome visitors. On the 23rd October, sentence of death was passed on the apostles and immediately carried out. The disaffected population were thus cowed and the authority of the *Rath* was re-established. In Osnabrück, not far distant, similar events were taking place; but right away to the north, in Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, Lüneburg, Wismar, and Rostock, the population seethed with excitement, and were strongly leavened with Anabaptist congregations and doctrines. Towards the east, the spread of the new teaching and of the net-work of Anabaptist

organisation was felt in Brunswick, Hanover, and Magdeburg, to mention only the principal among the town-populations affected by them and by the contemporary events passing in Westphalia.

At this time, and throughout these northern regions, territories, and cities of Germany, there seems to have been an organisation involving much closer relations than had existed as a rule between the different Anabaptist communities in the south in the earlier periods of the movement. This was in all probability due to the new work initiated by Jan Matthys and so energetically carried on by his disciples. From various documents and protocols which have been preserved, it would seem that a large number of Anabaptist communities throughout the north had agreed to take their cue from Lübeck in the action they should adopt. They appear to have been waiting for Lübeck to follow the example of Münster, and the expectation that this would happen seemed at one time in a fair way of fulfilment. But from causes unknown to history, Lübeck did not imitate Münster. Threatening as matters looked, there was no actual rising. Keller is of opinion

that the reasons may possibly be looked for partly in the external complications in which the Hanse town at this time had got entangled, and partly in a revulsion of feeling among the otherwise sympathetic population, on the ground of the alleged excesses that were taking place in Münster itself. As to the correctness of this view, it is impossible at present to decide.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MÜNSTER'S FALL AND THE FATE OF THE MOVEMENT.

When in February 1534 so many highly respectable ancient burghers of Münster were compelled to fly before the rising tide of Anabaptist fanaticism, they doubtless believed that in a few days, or weeks at the outside, they would be restored to their dwellings under the ægis of the Bishop's men-at-arms. Many among the party of the "respectables" in the town, namely, the Catholics and orthodox Protestants, were indeed firmly convinced of this. Already in the last days of 1533, the feudatories of the Bishop throughout the diocese were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to obey any sudden call to arms that might be made upon them. In the course of the following February this order was renewed, but it was not until after the new Anabaptist Council was chosen and the power was in the hands of the insurrectionary party, that a definite command was given to both orders of feudatories to assemble immediately

at places appointed in the neighbourhood of the city, fully armed, viz., with horse, armour and halberd. The response, however, was not satisfactory. Above all, the quality of the peasants and the smaller landholders who came left much to be desired from a military point of view. The fact is that the old mediæval "levy of the tenants" had for a generation past fallen into desuetude. Many tenants did not reside on their fiefs, whilst some holdings had fallen into the hands of churchmen and religious houses.

In the sixteenth century it was no longer possible to carry on warlike operations in the old feudal manner, or with the old feudal material, exclusively. The hired mercenary, the free-lance or *landsknecht*, dominated the military situation everywhere. At length recognising this fact, Bishop Franz von Waldeck began recruiting in earnest throughout all the neighbouring territories, but want of money prevented him even in this way from obtaining an adequate supply of trained soldiers. Such as it was, his army was in time constituted, the chief commands being distributed amongst his principal knightly vassals. But it was not only men and money that failed

Franz. He had no ordnance and quite insufficient powder and ammunition. In fact, at this time, the early spring of 1534, there is no doubt that concerted action on the part of the sectaries in the numerous smaller towns and not a few important ones where the Anabaptist party, as such, was already strong, and where large sections of the population outside their ranks were in sympathy with them, would have resulted in at least a temporary victory for the cause throughout the whole of north-western Germany and possibly in Holland as well. The same reasons, of course, which would have rendered any permanent success impossible for the peasant levies in the previous decade of the century would have operated now to render any lasting result unattainable for a movement that rested economically in the main on the poorer sections of the town populations. Although the era of the craftsman was not as yet by any means over, still, with the close of the Middle Ages and the rapid decline of the Guild-industry, it had become a decadent factor, which receded in proportion to the advance made by the earlier forms of modern capitalism. The dream of the impoverished townsman of a millennial kingdom,

based on mediæval domestic communism and animated by the ideals of the small artificer of the time, was in itself as hopeless as the corresponding dream of the peasant ten years before, which also aimed at harking back to an idealised form of a condition of things that had passed away. The lines of social development were moving in quite another direction.

So great was the Bishop's need financially that, after resorting to the most desperate expedients in the matter of credit, hypothecating taxes, rent-dues, and the like, with insufficient results, the extreme course was adopted of turning into money the gold and silver treasures of the religious houses and churches. The act was excused on the ground of the necessity of preserving them from the sacrilegious hands of the Anabaptists, but was, nevertheless, not carried out without protests on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities immediately concerned. Even if money had been forthcoming, there would have still remained the difficulty of procuring the munitions of war within a reasonable time. As late as May we hear of the besieging army being unable to acquire the means to fire more than about six ordnance shots a day. By slow

degrees and with great difficulty pieces of ordnance came in, bought or loaned from neighbouring nobles. But it proved still more troublesome to hire men. The free-lances, who were prepared to offer their services to any potentate or any cause for a consideration, fought shy of the Prince-Bishop, whose semi-bankrupt condition was a matter of public notoriety. The same distrust prevented the nobles and ecclesiastics, with whom the Bishop was anxious to negotiate loans, from responding to any great extent. On the other hand, the Anabaptists were known to have the wealth of the Metropolitan City at their disposal, and no day passed but numerous free-lances entered the town, not only singly, but even in companies, to take service with the defence. They were largely recruited from the class to which the Anabaptists mostly belonged, namely, the town proletariat. Hence their intrinsic sympathies may have been on the side of the sectaries.

The Bishop's demands for help being coolly received by the three principalities, Hesse, Cleves and Köln, he turned towards the Imperial possessions of Spain and Burgundy. The growing *rapprochement* between Franz and the Court of

Brussels made the Evangelical Count (*Landgraf*) Philip of Hesse anxious, and probably led to his sending two small contingents to assist the Bishop's army in the siege. On the 26th March there was a conference of Princes and higher nobles at a place called Orsoy. At this conference the Duke of Cleves and the Archbishop of Köln seem to have at length consented to afford substantial aid in money, men and war material. This enabled Waldeck to free himself from obnoxious obligations to the Evangelical Hesse. He sent back the two contingents already received from the Count, and also forwarded a letter of thanks by a special messenger, informing him that he no longer required his help.

The Bishop was now relieved, in fact, for the moment, from the necessity of relying on either Hesse or Burgundy, and henceforward turned his attention to his great Catholic neighbours. But the delay caused by these negotiations had given the Münsterites time to perfect their defensive works and to otherwise organise the resistance to the besiegers. It was not until the 21st May that Waldeck felt himself strong enough to begin the bombardment of the town.

Five days later—it was on a Whit-Monday—he proceeded to storm the ramparts. This attack, carried out, in part at least, by drunken and imperfectly disciplined free-lances, was easily repulsed by the inhabitants, as we have seen.

A portion of the besiegers, nevertheless, seem to have fought with vigour, and succeeded in bringing the scaling-ladders up against the walls. But this was as much as they could do before the whole force was driven back in confusion with heavy loss. The defeat had a serious effect on the Bishop's position. No-one in the camp would hear of repeating the experiment. The Bishop's men had to confine themselves, for a long period, to sapping and mining operations.

At the same time the two principal allies of the Episcopal see, Cleves and Köln, were entreated for more help. A new conference of neighbouring potentates was called together in June at Neuss, and on the 20th of the month further support was promised, and an advance of sixty thousand gulden in money was guaranteed. On his side, the Bishop had to undertake to accept as his counsellors Count Wilhelm of Nassau and two other noblemen indicated by his allies. They were to be present in the camp,

and all military measures proposed were to be submitted to them. But it was not until more than two months later, on the 24th August, that it was decided in a council of war to employ the full force of the besieging army in a new assault on the city. A formal summons to surrender was to precede it. This was made on the following day, accompanied by promises of amnesty. Jan of Leyden replied to the Bishop's envoys that he had no need for his Lordship's mercy, that the Heavenly Father would show him mercy and would punish the godless who were his enemies.

The Bishop, thinking that his offers had not reached the population, reiterated them in letters which he had secretly conveyed into the town. Time was given until the 27th August to deliver up the city. But the beleaguerers waited in vain. Night fell on the 27th August without a sign of submission. On the 28th, the bombardment began. Three days' cannonade effected some breaches in the walls. At five o'clock in the morning of the 31st, the attack was opened along the whole line. The Bishop's forces at first succeeded in making some headway. They pressed beyond the outer line of fortifications

at several points, but it was soon found that a well-organised resistance had been prepared. Some treachery by certain persons from the Bishop's camp had revealed the plan of attack, it is said. As soon as the bulk of the mercenaries had advanced within range, a well-directed fire suddenly opened upon them from the battlements. Columns advancing simultaneously were hurled back in confusion. Repeated attacks on the gates were made by detachments of free-lances, but in every case without result. The assault had proved a huge disaster for the partisans of "order," and the discomfiture of the Bishop's forces was complete. Forty-eight commanders had fallen, besides many hundreds of the rank and file. The Anabaptists, as already recorded, were jubilant, and the signal victory had, as we have seen, important results for the internal politics of Münster. Unfortunately, as has always been the case throughout history, the intrinsically weaker party, the party of revolution, did not understand the necessity of immediately following up its success. Had a powerful sortie at once been made, the entire camp of Münster's feudal overlord might have been captured and the city freed, at least for the time being. As it was, the

Bishop removed himself out of harm's way, followed at no long interval by his leading nobles. This was the signal for wholesale desertion on the part of the mercenaries. It was, in fact, only by extravagant promises of future good pay that a remnant was persuaded to remain behind to continue the contest with the "Kingdom of God."

But money was now again lacking. Writing to the Duke of Cleves on the 6th September, Waldeck complains that the attack and the preparations for it have exhausted all that was left of the money he received in June, and begs him to come to his assistance without delay. At the same time he expresses his conviction that the Duke's help alone will not suffice, and that it will be necessary to call out the whole Imperial district of the Lower Rhine. On the 11th September the return-messenger arrived with a letter in which Duke Johann promised to raise, not merely the Lower Rhine district, but also those of the Upper Rhine and Lower Saxony. The reply rejoiced the Bishop's heart and relieved him of apprehensions as to his ultimate success.

Meantime he had to keep the siege going until the arrival of the reinforcements. The first

step was the calling of a Landtag at Telgte, for more money was urgent, even for the interim operations. At Telgte, the Bishop laid before the Westphalian "estates" the desperate straits to which the diocese was reduced and the imminent danger of delay in furnishing credits. In consequence of his representations, it was resolved to raise the necessary money by an extraordinary tax of three gold gulden for every field under the plough, and two gold gulden for every field on sandy or otherwise non-agricultural soil. From every peasant possessing a horse half a gulden was levied, and from all working for money-wages ten per cent of their earnings. These taxes, which were collected with difficulty, would not have proved sufficient to carry on the siege had they not been supplemented by an immediate advance of money from the Duke himself. The situation continued for some little time favourable for the insurgents, but they failed to take advantage of it. The Anabaptists inside Münster were too much occupied with organising their miniature Kingdom of God, just at this moment, to spare the requisite energy for coping with the primary necessities of ultimate military success.

The effect of the Anabaptist victory of the 31st August was to increase the excitement in the small Westphalian towns, including Warendorf, and the attempt was eagerly made by them to bring about an understanding between Münster and its Prince-Bishop. But it was of no avail. As we know, on the arrival of the Anabaptist emissaries on the 12th October, Warendorf openly declared for Münster and Anabaptism. It was only the suddenness of the Bishop's action in crushing the insurrectionary party in the town that prevented a serious diversion in favour of the Münsterites from establishing itself.

The Protestant estates, which were now again called upon to lend aid, showed themselves recalcitrant. The treacherous judicial murder of the syndic of Münster, Von der Wieck, by the Bishop, coupled with the report that it was Waldeck's intention to violently upset the Charter of religious freedom and reintroduce Catholicism, had tended to alienate them. Waldeck had to look elsewhere. His emissaries were sent to all the Catholic Powers, great and small, throughout the north-west. They represented, as was in fact the truth, that the object of the Münster Anabaptists was to raise insurrection far and

wide in every town and village, and hence that their own interests urgently demanded that they should make common cause with him in crushing out the centre of the most dangerous and widespread disaffection the country had known. Meanwhile the Duke of Cleves had called together the Lower Rhenish and Westphalian "estates." The Bishop represented to them the urgency of the situation, that he was acting in the interest of the whole north-west country, that up to the present time the siege had cost him seven hundred thousand gulden, and that for their own safety they should immediately afford substantial help. The "estates," however, thought that the matter was Imperial rather than local, and concerned the whole German peoples rather than any one portion of Germany. They would only disburse some unexhausted monies that had been raised against the threatened Turkish invasion.

At his wits' end for resources, the Bishop wrote on October 31st to the Austro-Spanish authorities at Brussels, urgently appealing for aid, and he followed this up a fortnight later by the despatch of envoys to press home his arguments. His negotiations do not appear to

have met with any noteworthy results. At last, on December 14th, a joint meeting of the "estates" of the Lower Rhenish district (*Kreis*), including Westphalia, and of the Upper Rhenish district was with some difficulty brought about at Coblenz. Some fifty representatives were present, embracing delegates from all the important cities of the territories concerned. The Bishop's own envoys were not slack in employing suitable terms to describe the desperate nature of the situation, even going so far as to declare that if adequate help were not immediately forthcoming the Bishop would have to let the matter take its own course. These warnings had their effect. After some discussion, the following steps were decided upon, and the document embodying them countersigned by those present on December 26th. It was resolved by the "estates" to construct and garrison seven "block-houses" round the town of Münster. These were to be connected with well-defended moats and would constitute the first line of defence. The outer line was to be occupied by three hundred fully equipped horsemen, whose function it would be to prevent the desertion of the free-lances and to effectually cut off

Münster from the outer world by stopping any fugitives from the city who might succeed in getting through the line of block-houses. The Count of Dhaun and Falkenstein was made Commander-in-Chief of the forces. New military advisers were appointed. The "estates" pledged themselves to furnish fifteen thousand Rhenish gold gulden every month for six months. On the other hand, the Prince-Bishop had to agree, on the part of himself and his chapter, that no fresh changes in the internal constitution of the town should be undertaken without the consent of the "estates," who were parties to the present protocol.

It was clear that even these new arrangements did not give any prospect of a speedy conquest of the town. They simply meant its gradual reduction by starvation. Waldeck was far from satisfied. Moreover, he thought that his share of the financial burden was too heavy, whilst his authority was largely curtailed, being transferred to the Commander-in-Chief and the other nominees of the "estates." As it was, he had to call another session of his own "estates" for the purpose of raising fresh taxes to meet the situation.

The besieged met these measures of the enemy by a renewed and desperate effort to rouse the surrounding provinces. It was at this time that Bernhardt Rothmann published his pamphlet entitled "Concerning Vengeance," already referred to, which was secretly conveyed out of the town in thousands of copies by messengers of the Anabaptist leaders, special care being taken that it should be widely distributed in the northern Netherlands. The messengers started out on Christmas Eve, 1534. On the following New Year's Day, once more four burghers of Münster, having expressed their willingness, were sent as apostles to the Brethren without. They succeeded in getting through the outposts and reached the town of Hamm. Thence they went to Dortmund, Essen, and other cities of the northern Rhine. Subsequently they separated with the object of getting together a relief force, appointing to meet again after a certain time. One of their number, Zillis by name, meanwhile fell into the hands of the authorities, and from his confession, obtained as usual under torture, (our only source for the facts connected with this incident,) the mission would seem to have been not altogether fruit-

less, although the ultimate result hoped for was not gained.

As we have seen, encouraged by knowledge of the Bishop's embarrassment, and especially by the Anabaptist victory of August 31st, the flame of insurrection flared up at various points and continued to the end of the year to flicker on throughout a widespread area. But it was in all cases eventually suppressed. Even at the end of January, 1535, in the diocese of Utrecht, especially in the towns of Deventer and Zwolle, matters looked extremely serious for the powers that were. The Münsterites, as the newly recruited free-lances came into the Bishop's camp, found means of approaching them with offers of higher pay, and doubtless again succeeded in enticing some of them to their own side. Meanwhile Waldeck was still in bodily fear of an invasion on the part of the Netherland "brethren" and kept spies of his own in Holland and Friesland busy reporting to him whatever took place. At this time the confidence in their ultimate success on the part of Jan and his colleagues seems to have been at its height.

One of the apostles taken prisoner by the Bishop's agent at Osnabrück the previous October

was a former schoolmaster named Johann Graess. He stood in high odour of Anabaptist sanctity and was one of the intimates of King Jan himself. Condemned to death like the rest, he entreated to be allowed a special audience of Bishop Franz. This being granted, he declared his willingness to turn traitor, on condition of his life being spared. His proposal was that he should be permitted to escape and return to Münster, there to learn the intentions of the leaders and the plans of the Brethren in the north-west. He was then to find a pretext for again leaving the city, and, returning to the Bishop, was to divulge his information to him. The suggestion was accepted, and Graess was enabled to go. Accordingly, one morning, he presented himself with chains on his hands to the watchmen at the gates of Münster. Speedily recognised, he was received with open arms as the last survivor of the unhappy missionaries sent out in the autumn. He was brought before Jan and told him the story of the luckless fate of his comrades and of his own adventures. His reputation, high before, was greater still now, and he became more than ever the confidant of the King of Zion. At the beginning

of January, he left the town on a pretended mission to gather together the Brethren on the Lower Rhine who were prepared for action, to convene them at Deventer, and there to set up the standard of the New Jerusalem, receiving a special white flag from King Jan for this purpose. Deventer once in the hands of the Brethren, the march to the relief of Münster was to be undertaken. As soon as the watchmen espied from the walls of Münster the white flag indicating the approach of him and his host, the signal within the town was to be given, a sortie made in full force, and the camp of the besiegers thus attacked from both sides at once. Graess left Münster amid the blessings of its saints and prophets. He was, however, no sooner outside the defensive outworks, than he made straight for the Prince-Bishop's quarters. Here he betrayed all the plans of the Münsterites and their Dutch supporters. Notwithstanding the treachery owing to which the Bishop was enabled to circumvent their main plan, the Anabaptists succeeded, as we know, in gaining some headway in the north-west during the next few months. The leading events connected with this movement have been given in the last chapter.

With the ultimate extinction of the movement in question in May, the last hope of relief from without, for the beleaguered sectaries in Münster, vanished.

Already in April the condition of things in the town was very desperate. We gain some idea of what it was, not alone from Gresbeck, but from a letter sent out during that month by the Anabaptist authorities and intercepted by the Bishop's men. Therein we read of women and children in a state of most abject destitution, crying lamentably in the streets, of many who had for five days eaten no bread and lived on weeds and grass. The necessity to which the inhabitants were reduced, of slaughtering the horses for food, also heavily handicapped the defence, since in a sortie they were indispensable for drawing the heavy ordnance. On the other hand, the Bishop had at length succeeded in rousing the Imperial estates to come to his assistance, notwithstanding the opposition of the free towns, many of which urged negotiations with Münster, offering themselves as intermediaries, as well as of the Protestant princes who were unwilling to see Münster irrevocably given back into the hands of the papal party. A

fruitless attempt at bringing about a cessation of hostilities was in fact made during April by the bürgermeisters of Frankfurt and Nürnberg.

Within the town, as the weeks went on, famine rose higher and higher. As the cats, rats, mice began to give out, the people took to stewing down old shoes, skins, the leather-binding of books and the bark of trees. It now became necessary to dismiss all non-combatants from within the walls. Some of these falling into the hands of the enemy were put to death, while others were interned in different towns of the surrounding country. But the faith and enthusiasm of the combatants was inexhaustible. In a demand made by the commander of Waldeck's army to surrender, the leaders only replied that they were resolved to fight for the truth to their last breath; that food would not be lacking for them so long as they had two arms left, since they would, if necessary, devour the one while they retained the other to fight the enemies of God; that the Saints of God were ordained to destroy the fourth blast of the Revelations, which signified the Holy Roman Empire. In spite of everything, indeed, the town continued to hold out against the

forces representing the whole of the mediæval order of society, political social and religious. Force alone seemed incapable of breaking down the resistance.

At length treachery came to the aid of the powers of this world fighting against the New Zion. On the night of the 24th of May, four free-lances, among them an officer of Jan's body-guard, Johann Eck von der Langen Straten, accompanied by the citizen and guildsman Heinrich Gresbeck—the subsequent bitterly hostile chronicler of the Anabaptist *régime* in Münster, and our chief original authority for the events of the siege,—together made an attempt to escape from the city.

They had succeeded in climbing the earth-works of the besiegers when, in the darkness of the night, Gresbeck lost sight of his companions. Gresbeck himself was soon espied by the watchmen alike of the defenders and the besiegers, and summoned to surrender. He gave himself up to the Bishop's free-lances, from whom he begged his life, and who brought him at his entreaty to their captain, who was in a block-house hard by. Here, where one of his companions was shortly after brought in, he

was given to eat and to drink, and questioned as to the condition of the town and the defective places in the defence. He betrayed everything he knew as to the weakest gates and least defensible points in the walls. Meanwhile Johann or Hans von der Langen Straten had succeeded in the darkness in getting through the lines, and hearing that a captain of free-lances, Meynart von Hamm, under whom he had formerly served, was in the camp of the besiegers, made straight for his tent and revealed to him the desperate internal condition of Münster and, as Gresbeck had done in the other case, the weak places in the defensive works, besides suggesting a skilfully devised plan for taking advantage of them.

He undertook to introduce the besiegers into the town for a stipulated sum of money. The Bishop was apprised of the offer made, which he agreed to eventually, after considerable hesitation. Hans and Gresbeck were brought together, and directed to do all that was necessary for surprising the town according to the method proposed by Hans.

It was resolved to effect the entrance on the night of the 24th of June, a body of four hundred

trained soldiers being set apart for the purpose. An abortive summons to surrender having been made in the course of the day, a chosen body of men set out on their march to Münster in the midst of a terrific thunderstorm at eleven o'clock at night. The traitor Hans, who of course knew every nook and corner of the defence, conducted his men to near one of the gates which was weakly garrisoned, where the moat was narrowest and contained least water. A temporary bridge was rigged up with materials bought for the purpose by Gresbeck, across which several men passed, when it broke down and the rest had to swim. Scaling-ladders were placed against the outer wall, and the besiegers were soon in the watch-houses, which they found filled with sleeping Anabaptists, who were all immediately massacred, with the exception of one, from whom the password (which happened to be "earth") was extorted.

The main body of the besieging army now began to move towards Münster. The advance guard, consisting of Hans Eck's men, marched through the deserted streets to the Cathedral, which they occupied, at the same time seizing the reserve ordnance of the Anabaptists together

with a large quantity of ammunition which was kept there. They had, however, omitted the precaution of guarding both the outer and the inner gates, which were closed behind them by a few of the defenders who had now been aroused. Gresbeck with a few companions, in fact, had actually been caught between the outer and inner walls and thus had been prevented from following the main contingent. On perceiving by the beat of the drums that the enemy was within the walls, about eight hundred Anabaptist combatants gathered together on the *Prinzipal-markt*, and occupied the streets leading to the Cathedral. The enemy were then attacked and driven back to the Jakobi Church. Meanwhile more of the defenders rolled up and a further onslaught was made. The enemy being considerably reduced in numbers, were forced back into a narrow street which would have been a *cul-de-sac* but for a small door in the wall, which the captain of the free-lances espying, immediately availed himself of to free as many of his men as had time to force a passage through. Those who thus escaped made their way by by-lanes again to the Cathedral close, where they reorganised and fell upon the Anabaptists

in the rear. The latter who, in the *mêlée*, had not noticed the turn things had taken, finding themselves thus suddenly attacked from behind, thought the main body of the besieging army had effected an entrance. They in their turn were now thrown into some confusion and forced to retreat, but, quickly rallying, again inflicted such losses on the enemy that by three o'clock in the morning the free-lances were glad to open negotiations with the King, Jan of Leyden, during the course of which an armistice was maintained. The time was utilised by Steding, their leader, to send one of his men to the unguarded portions of the wall to make signs that succour was urgently needed. For meanwhile Waldeck's army, on its arrival before Münster, had found the gates and walls again well-manned. Treachery to his new master being suspected on the part of Hans Eck, orders were given by the Commander-in-Chief for a retreat, which was effected amid the jeers of the defenders on the wall.

Steding's emissaries being successful in making their signals understood to the nearest posts of the Bishop's army, an order was given for a renewed advance. The vanguard succeeded in forcing

one of the gates, and morning light, which was now breaking upon the streets of Münster, saw the free-lances of the besieging army streaming into the city. As soon as Steding heard the well-known signals, and his messengers returned with the news that the Bishop's army was entering, he forthwith broke off negotiations initiated with Jan of Leyden and the battle began anew. A general storm of the town was now made by the besiegers from six different points at once. Ever fresh bodies of the Bishop's free-lances poured in from different sides, and, before long, virtually the whole town was in the possession of the besiegers, with the exception of the *Prinzipalmarkt*, where the Anabaptists for a long time manfully stood their ground. While the battle was proceeding, one of the Bishop's men-at-arms, Johann Roichel by name, forced his way into Jan of Leyden's palace hard by the Cathedral, dashing into the private audience-chamber with a view of seizing the King himself, and was just in time to see the latter escape by a secret door in the wainscoting. On his attempting to follow him, Jan threw his helmet in the way and succeeded in getting clear of the building and making for the Ægidi

gate. Roichel, forcing his way into the boudoir of Jan's principal wife, the Queen (so called), he compelled her to surrender to him the regalia and the keys of all the gates that were in the King's custody. After leaving the Palace, Roichel was felled to the ground by an Anabaptist, but, recovering himself, succeeded in reaching one of the commanders of the besieging army already in the city and handing the keys over to him. In a short time the whole of the besieging forces were streaming in at all the gates. The Anabaptists fought with a desperate courage, even the women joining in the struggle, hurling missiles from the windows upon their foes. Bernhardt Krechting and Knipperdollinck were to the fore in the fray on the *Prinzipalmarkt* and round the Lamberti Church, where they erected a stockade of wagons as their last defence, aided by two or three pieces of ordnance, with which they dealt deadly execution for a long time on the enemy. The numbers of their followers reduced to three hundred and Krechting captured, the rest threw down their arms in despair. They, in fact, accepted an offer made at this moment, to surrender their position on a promise of a safe conduct to leave the

city, a fact which shewed that the conquerors still considered them not unformidable. Knipperdollinck had already succeeded in reaching a place of safety, for the time being, in a house near the town wall. Many of the saints had sought refuge in the *Rathhaus*, which was immediately stormed and the inmates massacred.

At last the fighting Anabaptists were reduced to four men who had entrenched themselves in the tower of the Lamberti Church. Here they for some time bid defiance to their foes, killing several of the enemy who attempted to reach them. The tower was held until three of their number had fallen. The free-lances at last bursting in, seized the survivor and hurled him down on to the street below.

By mid-day on this 25th of June, 1535, the city of Munster, the New Zion, passed once more into the hands of its feudal overlord, Franz von Waldeck. The Prince-Bishop received the news of the capture of Munster by special messenger at six o'clock the same evening. An atrocious massacre throughout every quarter of the town now ensued. We read of many thrown from windows to be caught on the spears of the free-lances in the street below.

The promise of safe conduct to the three hundred who had surrendered on the *Prinzipalmarkt* was only partially effective. Little distinction was made by the murderous, plundering bands of free-lances between these and others. All alike, irrespective of sex or age, were involved in an indiscriminate butchery. The greater number of fighting Anabaptists lay dead in the market-place and surrounding streets. Of the leaders, Hermann Tylbeck, who was seized in the Ægidi monastery, was immediately murdered and his body thrown into the neighbouring sewer. No attempt was made by the commanders of the Bishop's army to stay the blood-lust of their men. When at last it was necessary to step in, it was only to give murder a legal form. To the indiscriminate massacre wholesale executions succeeded. Every street and every public building were filled with the bodies of the slain.

Jan of Leyden on his escape from the Palace had taken refuge in the tower over the Ægidi gate. His disappearance was the cause of great annoyance to the conquerors. At length his whereabouts were betrayed by a boy, and the free-lances at once proceeded to seize him. As they appeared he adjured them

not to lay hands on the Lord's anointed. They immediately fell upon him with the words, "If thou canst do ought, straw King, free thyself from our hands!" Tearing the heavy gold chain from his neck, they carried him back, bound, to the Palace. Bernhardt Krechting, the chief counsellor of the King, (who had been captured in the fight on the market-place) was also kept in confinement. His brother Heinrich Krechting succeeded in breaking-out of the doomed city with the remains of the little band who surrendered on the promise of safe conduct. The "minister of justice" of the New Zion, Knipperdollinck, had disappeared and could nowhere be found, and since, owing to the close watch which was kept on all the city gates, it was considered impossible that he could have escaped, it was concluded that he must be still in the town. Having been reported as last seen in the neighbourhood of the so-called "New" Gate, the Commander-in-Chief of the army, Ulrich von Dhaun, gave orders for all the surrounding houses to be searched. Knipperdollinck had, in fact, first concealed himself in a small house in the city-wall, whence he had attempted to gain the open during the night. He had succeeded in getting

over the wall, but finding the moat too deep, returned again to the town. All the women dwelling in the neighbourhood of the "New" Gate were now ordered to appear on the market-place and given the alternative of either betraying Knipperdollinck or leaving the city. Knipperdollinck's landlady, who was among them, chose the former course. A detachment of fifty men was at once told off to arrest the great Anabaptist leader. As a reward for her treachery the woman was given the freedom of the town and her house spared plundering, but her husband was beheaded in the Lamberti churchyard.

The fate of Bernhardt Rothmann is unknown. It is generally supposed that he was killed in the street-fighting, and Dr. Ludwig Keller seems to be of this opinion, but his body was never found, although every search was made for it. Fabrizius Roland, in his account of the Münster rising, informs us that a doctor of the town, Gerhardt Marcellus by name, had informed him that Rothmann had escaped into Friesland, where he had taken refuge in the house of a friendly nobleman. Another report at the time indicated the town of Lübeck as his place of

concealment. The authorities at Lübeck, on being communicated with, denied that he was there. They alleged, however, that he had been seen in Rothstock, but at the time of replying had disappeared from thence, leaving no trace behind him. It has been suggested that he may possibly have taken ship from the last mentioned town to Sweden, and found an asylum with certain friends to the cause that Knipperdollinck had made there during his sojourn in the year 1524. In any case, so far as certainty is concerned, the fate of Rothmann is likely to remain an historical mystery.

Four days after the conquest of the town, the Prince-Bishop, Franz von Waldeck, made his official entry into Münster. Steding, the leader of the Free-lances, marched out to meet his master at the head of eight hundred of his men. He then formerly handed over to him the gold chain, the sword, and the spurs of the King of Zion, together with the keys of the city. Münster presented a terrible aspect after four days of pillage and massacre, with its ruined houses, its heaps of corpses, and its hunger-stricken population. Waldeck, however, only remained in the city two days, since Nemesis in the shape of

the plague followed close on the inhumanity of the conquerors. The traitor Hans Eck von der Langen Straten, on claiming his share of the booty, was repudiated with contempt for the *rôle* he had played by the very free-lances whom he had led into the city. He went off with his booty, but died shortly after from the effects of a wound he had received in an altercation with one of his own men. The mercenary troops, with the exception of a small garrison left in the town, were before long disbanded.

A court was now established for the trial of those who held Anabaptist views. The women were for the most part given the alternative of formally recanting their faith or being banished the town. As a matter of fact, many of those who were steadfast were executed, among them being Divara, Jan of Leyden's "Queen," who heroically confessed herself to remain a rebaptized daughter of Zion. She was beheaded in the Cathedral close. All the male inhabitants of Münster who had been in any way prominent during the late *régime*, fared similarly. Bockelson himself, Knipperdollinck, and Bernhardt Krechting, as the leaders of the whole movement, were reserved for a more cruel fate. The Prince-

Bishop had Jan brought to him to Yburg, where his quarters were. On Bockelson being led before him, Waldeck mockingly asked him, "Art thou a King?" To which Jan replied, "Art thou a Bishop?" On being further interrogated with what right he had usurped power over the inhabitants of Münster, he again replied by demanding of his conqueror, "Who hath given thee right and power over the city of Münster?" On the Bishop's replying that he had been elected by the Cathedral Chapter and had been confirmed in his position by the Pope and Emperor, Jan rejoined, "And I have been called to the leadership by God and his Prophets." Waldeck then reproached Bockelson with the sufferings he had brought upon his people and the heavy losses he had occasioned the diocese. The prisoner once more replied that, so far as he was concerned, he would have held out till, together with his people, he had perished of hunger, rather than have surrendered the New Zion to the godless. For the rest, Waldeck could get back his costs if he would imprison him in a cage and let him be shewn to the curious; the tribute of a gulden from every one anxious to see the King of Zion would bring in money

not merely sufficient to cover the expenses of the campaign, but to pay all Waldeck's private debts as well. "Good," replied the Bishop, "I will shut thee up in a cage indeed, but otherwise than as thou hopest!" Jan Bockelson of Leyden, Prophet and King of the New Jerusalem, was accordingly enclosed in an iron cage and transported from town to town, and from village to village, in the charge of a guard of free-lances, to be exposed in the market-places. In the course of his journeyings, it is related by Conrad Heresbach in his "*Geschichte der Münsterischen Wiedertäufer-rotte*," that he was brought to Duke John of Cleves, who is stated to have asked him what had originally led him to go to Münster, to which Bockelson answered that the spirit had revealed to him that Münster was destined to be the Heavenly Jerusalem, and that he himself should accomplish great things there. In order to assure himself of the truth of this revelation, he had visited Krechting on his way, and had cured a sick serving-maid in his house. In Münster itself a vision appeared to him in his bed-chamber, that a silversmith from Holland should be killed in the fighting outside Münster, and that he himself received the command of God to marry

his widow. Finally, Bockelson was cast in chains into one of Waldeck's castles, Krechting and Knipperdollinck being imprisoned elsewhere While in prison an attempt was made to induce the stalwart Anabaptist leaders to recant. Sundry theologians were sent for this purpose to discourse with them, but without result. It is alleged, indeed, on the part of the authorities that Jan made certain concessions, apparently in the hope of saving his life. Whether this report be true or not, coming as it does from prejudiced sources, we have no means of judging. But even these witnesses admit that, in principal, he remained unshakable.

After an imprisonment of six months, the three Anabaptist leaders were, on the 19th of January, 1536, brought back to Münster, there to go through the farce of a final trial and to suffer execution. The latter event we relate in the words of the courtly chronicler of the Anabaptist history of Münster, Kerssenbroick (II. page 212). The scene took place on the 22nd of January, 1536, on the *Prinzipalmarkt*, in the presence of the Prince-Bishop and a number of clerical and temporal dignitaries. "The executioners first of all enclosed the King in a collar of iron," writes Kerssen-

broick and bound him to a stake. Thereupon they seized glowing pincers and fettled him on all fleshy and other parts of his body, in such wise that the flame shot out and such a stench arose that those on the market could not bear it. A like punishment did the others suffer, albeit they bore this torment with less patience than the King, and made known their pain with much lamentation and crying." The official chronicler goes on to describe how Knipperdollinck sought to strangle himself with the collar that bound him to the stake, and how the executioners, seeing this, tied his head fast to the stake with a cord passed through his teeth, and how, after these unhappy martyrs to the doctrine of Anabaptism had been tortured as above long enough to satiate the blood-thirst of their persecutors, their tongues were torn out and they were pierced to the heart with a dagger. The bodies of Jan of Leyden and his companions were, as is well known, placed in cages (probably the same in which they had been borne living as a public spectacle) and these were hung to the tower of the Lamberti Church, where they remained undisturbed until a few years ago. The old tower having then become structurally unsafe,

had to be pulled down and was, with questionable taste, replaced by an ordinary modern steeple, on which, however, the original cages may still be seen.

The conventional historian, in his conventional hatred of the old militant Anabaptism with its communistic tendencies, and writing as he does in the interest of the possessing classes of his own day, has been found not ashamed to condone, or even to justify, this fiendish and atrocious crime perpetrated by the dominant classes of a bygone age. And this, be it remembered, is the same conventional historian who, when writing of the French Revolution, can gasp in horror over the September massacres or the Reign of Terror, or, when treating of more recent events in French history, can similarly maunder, shuddering at the execution of the Archbishop of Paris by the communards of 1871. Verily the ethical judgments of the conventional historian are wonderful and past finding out on any theory of ethical logic hitherto accepted. The doctrine of the "class-struggle" as the basis of ethical as of other judgments alone makes their real meaning clear.

The extinction of the Kingdom of God in

Münster meant practically the end of militant Anabaptism. The slaughter of Anabaptists under the form of public execution was fearful in the territory owning allegiance to the inhuman monster Franz von Waldeck.

A papal legate sent on a mission to Münster shortly after the events in question, relates that as he and his retinue neared the latter town "more and more gibbets and wheels did we see on the highways and in the villages where the false prophets and Anabaptists had suffered for their sins." He remarks that the Prince-Bishop of Münster seemed more like a captain of war than a spiritual Prince. He received them, he says, in his castle near Münster, in the costume of a military commander, and the next day he escorted them with warlike array into the city itself. But, notwithstanding wholesale slaughters and executions, numbers of fugitives from the fallen city of the Saints succeeded in reaching distant lands. Many are said to have come over to England and as we shall see in the next chapter, Anabaptists, and Anabaptism, first came into prominent notice in England shortly after this time.—The disciples of the militant Anabaptism which had made Münster their

stronghold never again attained to more than local prominence. There were, nevertheless, a few attempts during the succeeding half century at insurrection in the interest of Anabaptism. Thus, in the summer of 1548, an effervescence manifested itself again in the Münster territories, and in this, and the following year, there were disturbances and many attempts at arson. Numerous executions, amongst them that of the Münster Prophet Dusentschur's sister Margaret, did not mend matters. The agitation continued, and became so threatening that in October 1556 the Prince-Bishop engaged bodies of free-lances to clear the districts of its Anabaptist elements. Each man was paid a wage of four thalers a month, with twenty thalers premium for every Anabaptist prisoner brought in. This seems to have had the effect of suppressing the movement for the time being. Little more was heard of militant Anabaptism in Westphalia till the year 1574, when a certain Johann Wilmsen, the son of a preacher who after the capture of Münster had escaped into the territories of the Duke of Cleves, proclaimed himself a new King of Zion. He followed closely the doctrine and practice of Jan of Leyden, inclu-

ding communism and polygamy. He gathered together some three thousand fighting men around him, and for some time successfully devastated Westphalia and its surrounding districts, attacking, not without success, castles and other strongholds of the nobility. For five years he set the constituted authorities at defiance. Wilmsen was at last seized in the territory of Jülich. After a period of imprisonment he was burnt alive on the market at Cleves on the 12th of March, 1580. In the absence of fuller and more impartial information concerning Wilmsen, it is difficult to say with certainty whether he was a genuine fanatic of the type of the Münster prophets, or whether we have to do with a charletan who used the name and doctrine of Anabaptism as a cloak for mere plunder and brigandage. It should not be forgotten in this connection, that he stedfastly denied to the last the excesses alleged against him, and that our information concerning him comes exclusively from hostile sources.

We have seen that from the time Anabaptism began to spread to any extent, there were two currents in the party; the one taking the original anti-physical force and mainly theolo-

gical direction; the other, more definitely political, which implicitly or explicitly recognised the justifiability and even the duty of a resort to carnal weapons in the battle against the godless powers of this world. For a long time the original pacific current maintained the ascendency, until a persistent and merciless persecution gradually, in the opening years of the fourth decade of the century, gave to that tending in the opposite direction a vast increase in power, while with Matthys, Bockelson, and the success of the movement identified with them throughout the North-Western territories of the empire, it became for the time being dominant throughout the Anabaptist world.

The effect of the fall of Münster and the extinction of the reign of the Saints was to give the pacific and non-resistant elements within the party an impetus which caused them finally to regain their original ascendency. In spite of the flickerings of the militant Anabaptism above referred to as having taken place in Westphalia and the neighbouring districts on different occasions during the next half century, Anabaptism never again achieved anything as an independent political force. What is more, the social side of

the movement, which had previously been recognised by both sections alike, tended more and more to fall into the background in favour of purely theological interests.

The old family-communism among the faithful, founded on what was believed to have been the practice of Apostolic times, ceased to be insisted upon. Already, in a Congress held in August 1536 at Bockholt, the advocates of pacific tendencies gained a decided victory over the militant section. An extreme moderate party called the "Obbenites," after its founder, one Obbe-Philipps, .attained increasing influence. It taught, as one of its leading tenets, that no other social and political conditions than those already established were to be looked for here below, and that it was the duty of the Saints to accept them in all humility as the dispensation of God.

The new direction was strengthened by the ability and influence of a new recruit, Menno Simon. Simon, who was born in Friesland in 1492, had been a Catholic priest. Some authorities state that he did not definitely join the party till 1536, though he seems to have had relations of some kind with the movement for three or four years previously, having supported

the teaching of the moderate and non-political section in 1533 against Jan Matthys, whose star was then in the ascendant. Menno Simon's brother, it should be mentioned, had died bravely fighting for his co-religionists, as one of the crusaders who set out in the spring of 1535 in the forlorn hope of relieving Münster. Whether he had already joined the movement before or not, Menno in any case first became recognised as a leader of the party from the time of the Bockholt Congress of 1536. The moderate section thenceforward began to take the name of Mennonites. They were opposed by the Batenburgers, the followers of Johannes Batenburg, the bürgermeister of a small Dutch town, who had recently joined the party, and after the fall of Münster became the leader of the revolutionary political section. Batenburg was executed in 1537 in the Netherlands, and, as already remarked, the tendency in the party represented by him and his followers rapidly and steadily declined in influence and numbers. In addition to Menno Simon, David Georg, or Jöris, as he is sometimes called, one of the apostles sent out from Münster by Jan of Leyden in the autumn of 1534, now came prominently to the fore as

a leader. He seems at first to have endeavoured to unite the two sections, but later on his influence was thrown entirely on the side of the prevalent non-political tendencies. We shall have occasion to refer to the subsequent career of David Georg in the next chapter, in connection with the Anabaptist movement in England, for it was in the form of his teaching as modified by Henry Nicholas that Anabaptism for the most part took root in this country. As regards the socio-political question, Georg or Jöris, unlike the Mennonites who repudiated all notion of socio-political change in this world, made a concession to the extreme party (so-called) in professing to believe in the ultimate acceptance of Anabaptist teaching by the great ones of the earth, who would then voluntarily lay down their wealth and privileges, and thus the ideal of the reign of the Saints on earth would be pacifically inaugurated. Both Jöris and Simon succeeded in dying in the odour of peaceful and well-to-do middle-class respectability. Jöris certainly had to adopt an assumed name in order to live unmolested in prosperous circumstances as an esteemed burgher of the town of Basel. (See next chapter.) Menno, on

the other hand, had no occasion for such subterfuges. The harmlessness—nay, utility for the governing classes—of teaching which insisted on submission to the powers that be as a Christian duty, became at length recognised by the temporal authorities within whose jurisdiction he worked, and Menno Simon was allowed not only to live and die in peace, but also found time and opportunity to amass a not inconsiderable fortune. David Georg or Jöris died in 1556 in Basel, and Menno Simon in 1559 at Aldesloe in Holstein, on the estate of a nobleman in that territory, who, in the course of a military career in the Netherlands, having come into contact with the Anabaptists of Menno's school, had formed a high opinion of their thrift, sobriety, industry, and the virtues generally associated with a thriving community of handicraftsmen, and in consequence had offered the lands within his jurisdiction as a home for their leader and as many of the rank and file as liked to settle there. Towards the end of the 16th century the Anabaptist communities on the continent of Europe, from Moravia on the one hand, to the extreme of north-west Germany on the other, began to settle down, as a rule, into

law-abiding and generally prosperous, religious organisations. The old persecution, although now and again feebly flickering up under the pressure of local circumstances, never more became general or sufficient to seriously threaten the existence of the communities. Even the Netherlands, where in earlier times religious persecution had raged with such intense fury, became, after their liberation from the house of Habsburg, a safe asylum for all Protestant sects, the Anabaptist included. By this time almost the whole of the Anabaptist sectaries of these regions had accepted the teaching of Menno Simon, and hence the two appellations Anabaptist and Mennonite had become practically synonymous, the older one, in fact, tending to fall into disuse. Towards the end of the century the Mennonites began to be openly tolerated, and their meetings unmolested, in the low countries.

In 1626 they were officially recognised as a religious body with the right to freedom of worship, and as such they exist to this day. A similar fate has befallen the Moravians and other fractions of the once powerful and widespread Anabaptist party so dreaded by those in authority.

The Anabaptist revolt of the fourth decade of the 16th century is commonly regarded as a kind of continuation or recrudescence of the great peasant revolt of the previous decade. There is, of course, much of truth in this view. Both movements sprang from like economic causes, and both movements represented substantially the same order of thought as regards their ideal expressions. There was, however, a difference between the two movements in respect of the classes engaged in them. The revolt of 1524—25 was predominantly an agrarian and a peasant movement, although it was powerfully assisted by the poorer handicraftsmen and disinherited classes generally dwelling within the walled towns. It was the peasantry in this case which took the lead and initiated the movement in almost every instance. The Anabaptist movement of ten years later was, on the contrary, predominantly a townsman's movement, although, coinciding as its objects did with the aspirations of the peasantry, it had a considerable support from among them. The Anabaptists leaders were not, as in the case of the Peasants War, in the main drawn from the class of the "man that wields the hoe" (to paraphrase

the phraseology of the time): they were tailors, smiths, bakers, shoemakers or carpenters. They belonged, in short, to the class of the organised handicraftsmen and journeymen who worked within city walls. One figure, however, is prominent in both movements alike, if, perhaps, not so much in the latter as in the earlier, and that is the ex-priest or preacher, the man who formulated the social discontent of the time in the guise of its prevalent theological conceptions.

After the close of the 16th century, Anabaptism lost all politico-social importance on the continent of Europe. It had, however, a certain afterglow in this country, during the following century, notably up to the time of the Civil Wars and the Commonwealth. With this subject, with the influence, that is, of Anabaptism and allied doctrines in England during the 16th and 17th centuries, we shall proceed to deal in the following chapter.

# CHAPTER X.

## THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND.

ANABAPTISM would seem to have been introduced into England a few years after its origin in Zürich, but precisely how, when, or by whom is difficult to determine. Its appearance in this country was heralded, we gather, by a book entitled "The Sum of Scripture," many extracts from which were formally condemned by an assembly of Bishops and other theologians, convened by Archbishop Warham at the command of Henry the Eighth, in 1530. Two proclamations for heresy were the outcome of this convention. The seeds of certain heresies, it was declared, had been sown "by the disciples of Luther *and other heretics*, perverters of Christ's religion." Severe punishments were threatened "against those malicious and wicked sects of heretics who, by perversion of Holy Scripture, do induce erroneous opinions, *sow sedition amongst Christian people*, and finally disturb the peace and tranquillity of Christian realms, as lately

happened in some parts of Germany, where, by the procurement and sedition of Martin Luther and other heretics, were slain an infinite number of Christian people." [1]

The "other heretics" referred to in the above extracts may reasonably be assumed to have been Anabaptists or teachers of similar tendency, whilst the allusion to the disturbance of the peace lately in some parts of Germany has clearly in view the Peasants War of 1525, which was attributed to the pernicious effects of the new doctrines that by this time (1530) had been well-nigh all absorbed into the Anabaptist movement. The sentiments indicated can hardly refer to any other sect or body.

Two years before the English Church Council, in 1528, we hear of seven Anabaptists hailing from Holland having been arrested and thrown into prison, and of two of them being subsequently burned. [2] This would seem to indicate

[1] Wilkin's "Concilia," tome III. p. 737. The italics in the quotations are the present author's.

[2] This statement is to be found in Henry D'Anvers' "Treatise of Baptism," second edition, 1674, but I have been unable to confirm it in detail from contemporary authorities.

that Anabaptism was introduced into England from Lower Rhenish rather than directly from the original Swiss or south German sources, and these seven persons may well have been the actual protagonists of Anabaptism in England.

In the year in which Henry obtained recognition of his claims as supreme Head of the Church (1535), two edicts were issued against Anabaptists and Sacramentaries. "Many of the King's loving subjects," it was alleged, "had been induced and encouraged arrogantly and superstitiously to argue and dispute in open places, taverns, and ale-houses, not only upon baptism, but also upon the Holy Sacrament of the altar." Concerning the King's purposes towards such, we are informed, "forasmuch as divers and sundry strangers of the sect and false opinion of the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries, being lately come into this realm, where they lurk secretly in divers corners and places, minding craftily and subtilly to provoke and stir the King's loving subjects to their errors and opinions, whereof part of them by the great travail and diligence of the King's Highness and His Council be apprehended and taken, the King's Most Royal Majesty declareth..... like

a godly and Catholic Prince, that he abhorreth and detesteth the same sects and their wicked and abominable errors, and intendeth to proceed against such of them as be already apprehended according to their merits and the laws of the realm." Those who continued recalcitrant were also commanded to depart from the Kingdom in eight or ten days.

This first proclamation does not seem to have had much effect, since we find it followed up not long after by another, wherein it is stated that many strangers baptised in infancy, but contemning that Holy Sacrament, had presumptuously re-baptised themselves, and entering the King's dominions had everywhere spread their pestilent heresies "against God and His Holy Scriptures, to the great unquietness of Christendom and perdition of innumerable Christian souls." A great number, it says, had already been judicially convicted, and the rest "shall for the same suffer the pains of death." Another clause somewhat modifies this by enacting the banishment of all such heretics within twelve days on pain of death. (Wilkin, "Consilia," tome III. p. 759). In the year following these proclamations, we find records of ten persons having

been put to death in accordance with their provisions in various parts of the Kingdom, and of ten others having saved themselves by a timely recantation.

Two years later, in 1538, great efforts were made to expel those holding Anabaptist views from the country, and otherwise to root out the heresy. Evidence of communication with the continental sectaries on the part of Englishmen holding similar doctrines, was afforded by certain letters found on one of the German Brethren, by name Peter Tasch, who was apprehended by order of the Landgraf of Hesse. An extensive correspondence seems to have been disclosed between Tasch and certain English Anabaptists, one of whom had recently published a book on the Incarnation of Christ. From this correspondence it appears that Tasch himself was intending shortly to visit England. The Landgraf, who was just then in negotiation with Henry the Eighth with a view to the latter assuming the Headship of a Protestant league of German Princes, informed the English King of the above facts, and we may rest assured that the English Anabaptists suffered in consequence.

There are occasional, but not very frequent

allusions to English Anabaptism and Anabaptists in Bishop Latimer's sermons. Thus, in the fourth sermon preached before Edward the Sixth on March 29th, 1549, Latimer says: "I should have told you here of a certain sect of hereticks that speak against this order and doctrine. They would have no magistrates nor judges on the earth. Here I have to tell you what I heard of late by the relation of a credible and a worshipful man of a town in this realm of England that hath above five hundred hereticks of this erroneous opinion in it, as he said." The orthodox Protestants appear to have professed, sincerely or otherwise, to have held the theory about this time, that the Anabaptist missionaries were emissaries of the Pope, sent to discredit the Reform-doctrines in general. Whether Latimer took this view or not is uncertain, but an early editor of his sermons appends a footnote to the above passage, in which he says that persons were employed by the Pope during King Edward's reign to preach the pernicious doctrines of the Anabaptists for the purpose of obstructing the proceedings of the Reformers. (Cf. Carte, "History of England," tome III. pp. 252 sqq.)

During Elisabeth's reign English Anabaptism took definite shape in the form of a sect or party calling themselves the Family of Love. Its originator was one Henry Nicholas, Henrick Nicklaes, or Heinrich Nicolai, according to the various renderings of his name in English, Dutch, and German respectively. For literary purposes, it should here be mentioned, he exclusively used the initials "H. N." Nicholas, as we shall henceforth term him, it having been the name by which he was always known in this country, was a native of Münster, the great continental seat of militant Anabaptism, and was probably born in the early part of 1501. He is described as a wonder-child, who disputed on theological topics when he was only eight years old, and on account of the posers he put to his unhappy father, the latter took him to the Minorite monks of Münster for advice. Nicholas married at twenty, having become a member of the company of mercers of his native town. In spite of his trade avocations, he seems to have found time to continue his favorite theological hobby, for we hear of him having been imprisoned for heresy in Münster, although soon afterwards liberated. How his business fared at

this time we do not know, but a few years later, in 1530, before, that is, the rise of the great Anabaptist movement in his birthplace, he migrated to Amsterdam, in which city he again established himself in business. There is little doubt that here he definitely joined the Anabaptist sect, and we learn that he was imprisoned for some time in 1535 on suspicion of complicity with the Münster Kingdom of God. It was not, however, till 1540 that he appears to have felt a special or independent prophetic call. In this year, he started on a mission as the third Anabaptist prophet, as he called himself. Whom he deemed the first and second is not quite clear, though probably Melchior Hoffmann and Jan of Leyden (or possibly Matthys) were meant.

He took with him on his journey three "Elders" from amongst those of the Brethren who had joined him. One of these Elders, whose assumed name was Tobias, has left a record of events connected with the life of Nicholas, in a book published some time during the third quarter of the sixteenth century and entitled "Mirabilia opera Dei: Certaine wonderfulle Works of God which happened to H. N. even

from his youth. Published by Tobias, a Fellow Elder with H. N. in the Household of Love." In this book Tobias relates at length H. N.'s early theological heart-burnings, and his visions and dreams portending his future *rôle* as prophet. He did not assume such *rôle*, according to this first-hand authority, until he was thirty-nine years old, namely, as above said, in the year 1540, when he received the customary Anabaptist revelation from God to himself, endowing him with prophetic gifts and powers. "The Lord," says Tobias, "chose him to be a minister of His Holy Word, and prepared or ordained to H. N. for his assistance in the same administration, Daniel, Elidad, and Tobias (the writer), which continued always with him." Our author goes on to say that, "driven by the Holy Spirit," H. N. now endeavoured to set down all the Lord had revealed and commanded him. He soon, however, received a revelation that he was to write no more in the place in which he then was—namely, Amsterdam—but was to travel eastward towards a certain place "and dwell there till I Myself, by the hand of My Angel, bring thee from thence." The objective seems to have been Emden, in Westphalia,

where, as we otherwise learn, Nicholas resided some time. He appears at this time to have undergone persecution, since Tobias tells us that the Lord afflicted him heavily through his enemies. "The Lord suffered him to fall into the hands of the wicked, his enemies . . . and suffered him to taste and feel the condemnation of all ungodly ones in the hellish fire." In his affliction he occupied himself in composing psalms, which are given at length by his biographer, but amount to little more than turgid paraphrases of the biblical psalms. In Chapter XXVI. Tobias relates how his friend and spiritual father was released from his misery, how he continued to set forth his godly testimony in writing, and how certain "evil ones" and "false hearts" defamed him notwithstanding that he was "no man's enemy nor contemned any man for his religion." We gather that H. N.'s enemies again succeeded in getting a mandate launched against him when in the fifty-ninth year of his age, but he could not be arrested, "for the Lord carried him by the hands of His Angels, openly, before the eyes of his persecutors, away from that land."

In his sixty-fifth year, H. N. was ordered by

God to arise and journey towards a land which is not mentioned, but which was possibly England. He was to separate himself from his friends, with the exception of certain who were indicated—to wit, the Ancients and the faithful ones. "For of them shall travel with thee twenty-four, and they shall be called unto Me Nazareans." In addition, he was to take with him four of the chiefest seraphim in the Household of Love. The seraphim, it should be premised, were the foremost order in the hierarchy into which Nicholas had organised his new Church. He was to take with him copies of all his writings, to the end that he might revise them with the help of his Elders, in order to make them more plain to the understanding. Tobias, our author, was of the party, and he relates that they travelled "seven times seven days," without eating any kind of animal food "or creature that had any breath of life in itself or had received any," or drinking "any wine or strong drink for to rejoice our hearts." Much space is given to the relation of their religious exercises and their growth in spiritual life during their wanderings, and of their insight into the meaning of true Christian teaching. Finally, on the fiftieth day

of the journey came unto them "a still, soft, silent voice, wind, or spirit," and they were "enlightened in Christ." They became, Tobias says, altogether one being with the living Godhead of Jesus Christ, which appeared to them as in a cloud. They were informed that the land they were now in was the holy place of God's dwelling, where all His true lovers were to be brought. H. N. and his twenty-four Elders and four seraphim were to dwell there with God eternally. God would, through H. N., set up His most holy priestly office of Love, and he was to declare the doctrine over all the world through its ministry. And since God had united Himself with H. N. and the Elders, "all what ye out of the same My judgment curse, separate, or condemn, shall be accursed, separated, and into hell condemned, and all what ye bless shall be blessed in the Heavens." His writings, as before said, were to be carefully perused with the Elders, and the godly testimonies were to be declared in the plainest manner and so transcribed.

It is difficult out of the strange mystic rigmarole of which this book for the most part consists, to make out anything very definite as

to the history of the movement and its founder, or as to the geographical location of the country in which the organisation of the new Church, the so-called Family of Love, received its final shape. It may have been one of the provinces of western Germany, or it may have been, as already suggested, England, the country of its greatest success.

Another book, published about the same time as that of Tobias, is called: "The Displaying of an horrible secte of grosse and wicked Heretiques, naming themselves the Familie of Love, with the lives of their Authors and what doctrine they teach in corners. Newly set forth by I. R., 1578." The initials on the title-page stand for one John Rogers, and the book, as may be gathered from the title, was written from a hostile stand-point and may have been intended as a counterblast to Tobias's work. The author in the preface remarks upon the daily increase of this heresy, how in many shires there are meetings and conventicles of this Family of Love, "and into what number they have grown," says I. R., "my hart reweth to speak that which one of the same societie did auouch to me for truth." And again,

speaking of their literature, he complains that "many bookes are abroade, which I have not seene, and many I have seene, which I could not have the use of to reade," for, he says, that unless one will be "pliant to their doctrine," it is difficult to get hold of their books. He also complains that they would not confer or talk of any points of their doctrine with any save such as were inclined to be of the same mind. The author had been familiar with some of the sect for a long time and had had much personal intercourse with them. He writes in the hope that his book may do them good.

As regards the character and behaviour of H. N., he has the testimony of "diuers ancient persons and of good credite of the Dutch Church, who have been acquainted with the same H. N. and have dwelt together in one citie, and in one streete, being neere neighbours and familiar friends, who have declared and testified the certeintie of his behaviour and demeanor." Rogers draws attention to the fact that H. N. was a disciple of David Georg (Jöris) and reproaches him with publishing Georg's doctrines under his own name as the outcome of a pretended revelation from God. The

author's preface concludes with an exhortation to flee those who say that they have had a direct revelation from Heaven, such being contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

After Rogers's own preface follows another, by a certain Stephan Bateman, "Professour of Divinitie," who says that it is time to redress the evil of these heretics "or else will assuredly followe the like plague on us, as was at Münster in Germaine, by David Georg, John a Leede, Knipper Dolling (sic.), and others, the seede whereof is H. N., Henrie Nicholas, nowe of Colone, his disciple here in England, Christopher Vittel, Joyner, and many more. . . ."

The book itself proper begins with a biography of David Georg, how he was born in Holland at Delft, how he there taught his errors for forty years, how in 1544 he fled to Basel with his family and kinsfolk, calling himself John of Bridges, how after settling there he and his were made free burghers of the town, how he married his daughters very worshipfully, and how he built two houses, one of which was burned down through lightning, whilst the loft of the other collapsed. These calamities are regarded by the pious Rogers as warnings of

God's displeasure at unsound doctrine. He states that Georg lived eleven years in Basel "and it was not espied what doctrine he taught." At length, Georg's son-in-law beginning to suspect the orthodoxy of his wife's father's theological views, the latter endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to convert him. He wrote divers books, says Rogers, especially the "Wonder-Book," in which he taught his damnable errors. He declared, it was said, that he would not die, or that if he did he would rise again within three years. He died, nevertheless, on August 16th, 1556. The magistrates at Basel did not get wind of his doctrines until after his death. When they did, they ordered a house search amongst his acquaintances, and such as were suspect of his heresy were compelled solemnly to recant. The body of Georg was afterwards dug up and burned, together with his books and papers, on the market-place, a painting of him found in his house being included. The account of Georg given by Rogers is confirmed in its main facts from other sources.

But the "pernicious doctrine," although it may have been stamped out in Basel by these drastic measures, continued its course in its original

home in Holland, foremost amongst its exponents being Henry Nicholas, who now began to maintain Georg's ideas under his own name in his assumed *rôle* of prophet. He has, Rogers continues, "written many books in the Dutch tongue in a rude style, which many of his followers and scholars have translated into divers languages: his "Evangelium Regni" is in Latin, many are also in a Dutch letter in English, translated (as is supposed) by Christopher Vitell, a joyner, dwelling sometime in Southwarke. . . ." This Vitell, already alluded to by Rogers in his preface, seems to have been the most earnest and energetic of Nicholas's followers in this country. He is much mentioned in connection with Anabaptist and kindred doctrine at this time, and we shall return to him again later on. Rogers himself attributes to Vitell a large measure of the success obtained by the new heresy in England. Vitell, he goes on to say, by his wandering about had "infected many people with his poisoned doctrine, so much so that it is difficult to root it out, for even if they recant publicly, yet they return to their old opinions, as is well seene by many I could name, for it is a maxima in the Familie to denie before

men all their doctrine, so that they may keep the same secrete in their hearts." Many Englishmen, he continues, have been to Flanders to confer with this H. N., whose mild nature, humility, and patience they praise.

In the second chapter of this polemical work the author gives biographical facts concerning Nicholas, "testified by certeine of the Dutch Church yet living, who knew the man and were acquainted with him." Rogers erroneously states that H. N. was born in Amsterdam, adding that he was by many called Henry of Amsterdam, which was the case. He left Amsterdam, he says, with his brother John, about 1533, "when a certain sturre was in the towne tending to a tumult." The two brothers, he states, had prepared money to aid the Anabaptist Brethren in Münster. Their intentions were, however, discovered by the authorities, which led to their arrest and imprisonment. "At the last," he says, "they forsook the citie and came to Emden, a citie of Westfriesland." John Nicholas, the brother, was a brewer, whilst Henry, as we know, was a mercer. Respecting the latter, Rogers relates that he was of reasonable tall stature, "somewhat grosse in bodie." His son, also

called by Rogers John, kept his shop, but other authorities give the name of the son who attended to the business as Franz. "Henrie," our author states, "was very brave in his apparell, he would go in his crimson satten doublet everie holiday." He devoted his time to the writing of books, of which, besides the "Evangelium Regni," is mentioned "The Glasse of Righteousness," under which name he published two works, the smaller of which was the better known.

Rogers goes on to allege that Nicholas kept three women in his house "of same appareil." One of these was his wife, he said, one his sister, and one his cousin. The alleged cousin, falling ill, confessed to some neighbours who came to visit her that H. N. had "abused her bodie." On these persons denouncing him to the magistrates, he had to flee and his goods were seized. This is alleged to have happened when he was about fifty-seven years of age. It must not, however, be forgotten that the story comes from a hostile source and may not be authentic. He remained an exile from Amsterdam in the house of one of his disciples for a year or thereabouts, and was thought to

have gone with a companion to Naples after this. Many think, adds Rogers, that he is dead, but those of the Family of Love in England affirm that he is still alive. "If it be so," says Rogers, "by this collection *(sic)* he cannot be lesse that 78 years olde."

His biography finished, our champion of orthodoxy goes on to discuss the doctrines of H. N. and his followers. He, first of all, endeavours to show the identity of their tenets with those of the Münster Anabaptists, calling attention to the title assumed by Nicholas of "Restorator Omnium" and comparing it to that of Rothmann's celebrated brochure "The Book of Restoration," from which he gives extracts "that the reader may perceive howe in many things their doctrine in Münster and the Familie in England do agree." Eight articles from the same book are then quoted, amongst them that the writings of the prophets shall now be fulfilled, that Martin Luther and the Bishop of Rome are false prophets, "but of both Luther is the worst," that the time of "Restauration" is at hand, etc. "Their teachers in Münster," Rogers continues, "were all or the most part Hollanders, and David Georg did there teache

his blasphemous doctrine at that time." Amongst other tenets gathered out of the books of H. N. and taught in this country by the Family of Love, the following are given by Rogers:—that H. N. could no more err than Moses, the prophets, or Christ, that the Elders of the Family of Love possess divinity, inasmuch as God has in them again become man, and that the books of H. N. are of equal authority with the Bible.

Concerning H. N.'s style, Rogers has the following observations:—"For indeed in his Bookes he doeth not deale so plainly, as one being ledde by the spirit of God, whereof he boastheth: but verie subtilely, and darkely.... Many godly and learned men, to whom I have deliuered his books... have testified, that there is no matter in the Author, that may bee drawen into argument, but that it seemeth to be as a riddle, or darke speeche." And again: "As his tearmes and phrases are geyson and unwonted, soe they doe dasell the simple, with an admiration of a prudent spirite to be in the Author, whiche of meane wittes can neither be comprehended nor understood."

Emphasising the fact that H. N. is no more

than a disciple of David Georg, he quotes passages from Georg's writings to the effect that the doctrine taught by Moses, the prophets, and Christ, is not enough for salvation, but only to keep people in order till the coming of himself, David Georg, who is the true Messiah born of the Holy Ghost. According to Rogers, David Georg "was the hatcher of this heresie, and layde the egge, but H. N. brought forth the chicken." Rogers hears that there are at least a thousand followers of H. N. in England. Passages are also quoted tending to show that H. N., probably at a later period of his life, favoured sundry doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome. He had said that his followers might live under the obedience of any magistrate however ungodly, be he even the Turk or the Pope. He alleges that H. N. had been on terms of intimacy with a certain Cardinal Granella. By these facts he endeavours to give colour, as regards H. N. and his teaching, to the old calumny that the Pope was at the back of the Anabaptist movement. He exhorts all the followers of H. N. to forsake the "drowsy dreams of a doting Dutchman," who, he complains, would make "the true sense of the Holy Ghost"

of none effect by turning the biblical narrative into an allegory of his own tenets.

The latter portion of Rogers' book contains "an admonition to Christopher Vitell," in which the worthy Vitell is accused of having taught the doctrine of the Arians during Mary's reign, and of having had to recant the same at St Paul's Cross in the first year of Elizabeth's, "as by the register of ye Bishop of London doth manifestly appeare." Alluding to this and apostrophising Vitell, the author says: "and now Sathan hath possessed your mind with infinite more blasphemies of H. N.," adding "some of our own family can testify that you are an hypocrite and a dissembler and live of the spoile of the poor." At the close of the book, a confession is given, made by two of the Family of Love, or Familists, as the followers of H. N. were commonly called, "before a worthy and worshipful Justice of the Peace on the 28th of Maie, 1561, touching the errors taught amongst them at their assemblies." The confession states that they, the Familists, "be generally all unlearned," that only some of them can read English and that not very well, but of these the Elders and Deacons are chosen, that the congregations

meet at one of the disciples' houses, usually to the number of about thirty persons, the Bishop or Deacon reading and expounding the Scripture to them. When any new member is to be received into the congregation, all the Brethren assemble, and the Bishop or Elder declares to the new Brother that if he will be content that all his goods shall be in common amongst the rest of his Brethren he shall be received. He is then formally admitted, all the men and women of the congregation kissing him in turn. At their meetings, it is stated by the two deponents, they all have meat, drink, and lodging, at the cost and charge of the owner of the house, whom they call a *Raab*. It is added that they remain as long as he has good victuals for them, whereby sometimes they lose their *Raab*, who thinks himself overcharged in the matter of hospitality. The meetings are always held at night, each person knocking at the door and announcing himself or herself with the words, "Here is a Brother or Sister in Christ." The Elder is not allowed to speak when the Bishop is present, nor the Deacon before either of his superiors.

At the beginning of Mary's reign, they refus-

ed to go to church, but shortly afterwards they seem to have agreed amongst themselves to do outwardly all things that were required of them, though inwardly holding steadfastly to their faith. They are forbidden to say "God speede," "God morrow," or "God even," but are to address one another with the salutation "speede," "morrowe," "even." They may not say "God save" anything, for they affirm that all things are ruled by nature and not directly by God. At one time they prohibited the carrying of weapons, but as they became noted and marked they now allow the bearing of "staves." They are not bound to deal truly with any man in word or deed that is not of their sect. When their wives are to be delivered of child, they must use the help of none other but those of their sect. If any of them die, the husband or wife surviving must marry again with one of the sect, or else the offence is great. The marriage is made by the Brethren, who bring them together, sometimes even when the persons designated live a hundred miles asunder, as, for instance, Thomas Chandler, who lived in Surrey, has his wife fetched out of Ely by two of the congre-

gation, the man and the woman being utter strangers. They can divorce themselves before certain of the congregation, as indeed the same Chandler and his wife did, after they had been married a year. According to the deposition, the Familists deny the dogma of the Trinity and maintain that no man should be baptised before the age of thirty. They hold, our deponents say, that heaven and hell are present in the world amongst us and that there are none other. To bury the dead is objected to by them. They repeat "let the dead bury their dead." The two witnesses do not explain this objection. They reject the Sabbath-Day, holding all days to be alike. They believe that there was a world before Adam's time as there is now. They think that no man should be put to death for his opinion, and they strongly condemn Cranmer and Ridley for burning Joan of Kent. All alms are given by them to the Elders and Bishops, who have the distributing of them at their will, but to whom they are distributed no-one of the congregation knows. The usual statement is added in this connection as to the Bishops, Elders, and Deacons increasing in riches and becoming wealthy, whilst

their disciples waxed poor and fell into beggary —a statement that may be either true or a calumny, so far as our means of judging at present are concerned. It may even in this case have been added by Rogers himself, the canons of literary morality at this time not being strict.

We have given this evidence at length and as nearly as possible in the alleged *ipsissima verba* of the witnesses, as it is about the only succinct statement in existence of the leading tenets of the sect of the Familists. This, as will be noticed, contains hardly a doctrine that cannot be paralleled in one or other of the earlier sects into which the Anabaptist movement was divided, and which are indicated in Bullinger's enumeration. We should not, however, omit to mention that both Nicholas himself and his followers, the former towards the close of his life and the latter at a subsequent period, were prepared to deprecate or even to repudiate the denomination of Anabaptist. Thus the English Familists are found presenting a petition to King James I. in the year 1604, in which they "utterly disclaim and detest all the absurd and self-conceited opinions and disobedient and erroneous sorts of the Anabaptists, Brown, Penry, Puritans, and

all the other proud-minded sects and heresies." This emphatic declaration did not, however, prevent them from remaining under the ban of the law until they were lost sight of amongst the numerous sects and parties of the Commonwealth.

As to the writings of Nicholas himself, there remains little to say. The *Evangelium Regni*, regarded by many as his chief work, is to the modern reader nothing but a turgid mass of theological maunderings, which drones on page after page without *apparently* coming to any intelligible point, and out of which it is difficult to make any coherent doctrine. In spite of everything, the sect seems to have made continuous progress towards the end of Elizabeth's reign, and the action of the Privy Council in 1579 in deciding to hinder the further advance of this "lovely fraternity" (Cf. Documentary Annals, I. 392-396) does not seem to have resulted in anything important.

We have seen that the most energetic and probably the ablest apostle of H. N.'s teaching in England was Christopher Vitell, the Southwark joiner, who translated many of H. N.'s writings from Dutch into English. The chief scene of his

activity appears to have been the eastern counties, especially Essex and Cambridgeshire. (Cf. Strype's Annals, II. i. 487, ii. 285.) Vitell, it is reported, had worked in Holland, where he made the acquaintance of Nicholas and his followers, and whence, it is said, he brought the doctrine into England in the reign of Mary, when he came out of Delft to Colchester and joined himself to the professors of the Gospel there. He taught that the godly have in themselves free-will to do good, and he "could not away with predestination." Strype (ii. 596, 597) quotes the testimony of one Henry Crinel concerning Vitell and his teaching. This Crinel came to Colchester in 1555, where he met the Anabaptist joiner, who, says he, "as far as I could at that time learn, held many strange opinions and also taught divers points of doctrine scarce found and such as seemed to be before unheard of." Vitell had, Crinel says, left his trade of joiner to become "a great and learned school-master of the doctrine of a man who lived, as he said, beyond the seas..... This man he praised very much and reported many wonderful things of his angelic behaviour, who afterwards I understood to be one Henry Nicholas, a mercer of Delft,

in Holland." Vitell, he says, denounced infant baptism and condemned the Litany as set forth in Edward VI.'s reign. He denied the divinity of Christ and held that the godly cannot sin and hence had no need of the prayer, "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners!" Crinel admits that he was impressed with Vitell's "babbling," as he terms it, so much so that he thought of going to Oxford to consult Ridley and Latimer on the matter, had he not met with some men who satisfied his conscience in the mean season. Vitell wandered about the country and so came also to Willingham "where," says Crinel, "I dwell; and sent me to come and speak with him at an ale-house. But I sent him word, I would not come at him, nor have to do with him. This is very true: and so I testify with mine own hand: By me, Henry Crinel, of Willingham." It is clear from the above that the Arianism attributed to Vitell in the reign of Mary, which Roger seems to distinguish from his subsequent Familism, was really part of one and the same teaching. Strype also adds a similar statement to that of Rogers, as to Vitell's having openly recanted and been received again into the Church; but he also

admits that "the Family," meaning the Family of Love, denied this. Vitell seems to have had as co-adjutors in his propaganda two men named John Kemp and Henry Hart, who were called "free-will men" and who also had been informed against for heresy in Mary's reign.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century and in the first part of the seventeenth, various tractates and polemical essays, other than those mentioned, appeared, both attacking and defending the doctrines of H. N., though more usually the former. Of these may be adduced one entitled "An Apology," purporting to be written by "One of the Queen's Menial Servants" and dedicated to the Parliament then sitting. It consists in an endeavour to whitewash the Familists of the charge of heresy, insisting that they do not reject the Apostles' creed and the dogma of the Trinity, and protesting that they use no other ceremonies, laws, sacraments, etc., than such as the English Church admits, and that they obey the Queen and the magistrates, both spiritual and temporal. It indignantly repudiates that they were libertines, sleeping with one another's wives, that they desired, as was alleged, all men's goods to be in common, or that

they were hostile to the State—that is, to the temporal powers appointed by God. This tract, though a mere piece of special pleading not to be regarded as trustworthy in its representation of the views of the sect, seems to have had some vogue, as it was reprinted under the Commonwealth in 1656. It may be taken as belonging to a type of apologetic literature in which the apologist sets himself the task of showing that an unpopular system or doctrine means simply nothing at all but what everybody else amongst his contemporaries professes to hold. We have in the present day, *mutatis mutandis*, a corresponding kind of apologist for Socialism, who is ever intent on showing that Socialist principles involve little or no change, other than in points of detail, in the constitution of the existing order of Society.

On the hostile side of the controversy may be mentioned a brochure entitled "A Confutation of certain Articles delivered unto the Family of Love, with the Exposition of Theophilus, a supposed Elder of the same Family, upon the same Articles." This book, dated 1579, is dedicated to the Bishop of Ely, because, it explains, such kind of heretics are to be found

increasingly in his diocese. The writer, a certain William Wilkinson, M.A., notes down fourteen articles of heresies and errors of H. N., which he purports to confute. These, he says, he had shown to certain of the Family of Love before publication, and had received answers from Theophilus, one of their Elders, stating that "out of his malicious mind" the author had perverted the sense of the articles and framed sundry of them into errors. Wilkinson, in his turn, replies to Theophilus paragraph by paragraph, concluding his book with an appendix, "Notes to Know an Heretic," in which he quotes largely from Bullinger, especially from his enumeration of the Anabaptist sects. In the same year appeared another book, attacking the teachings of H. N. and dedicated to the Earl of Warwick, in which the author, J. Knewstubs, in his dedicatory preface exhorts the Earl to the "redress of a dangerous enormity which of late hath broken out in this land," to wit, the "atheism" brought by H. N. and his household, "who would be called the Family of Love." The book is called "A Confutation of certain Monstrous Heresies taught by H. N." Knewstubs hopes that what he says will sufficiently

persuade his honour "to enter into some speedy care and consideration to suppress so great and grievous a danger."

We hear of other sects, such as the Family of the Mount, the Essentialists, and the Libertines, which seem to have been off-shoots of the Family of Love, holding similar doctrines and practising a similar mode of life. Strype (Annals, II. 379, 380) says of the Family of the Mount that they lived in communism and in mutual edification, that they denied the utility of prayer, the resurrection of the body, also heaven and hell in the conventional sense, alleging that heaven is when men laugh, and hell when they are in pain or sorrow. He intimates that they held a rationalist explanation of Scripture and that they averred that all things came by nature. The Essentialists, he says, took their opinions from a Mistress Dunbar, a Scotchwoman. They believed that there was no such thing as sin at all, for God did everything in love. The Libertines, he says, held, like the earlier Anabaptists, that no doctors nor learned men could preach the word truly, basing this opinion on the saying of Christ that the Gospel was hidden from the wise and prudent

and revealed to babes and sucklings. Like the earlier Anabaptists, too, they asserted that the Bible in itself was but ink and paper, that it was of secondary significance only, but that the true word of God was the spirit and life of the individual believer. This is, of course, simply a recrudescence of the old Anabaptist doctrine of the "inner light." "These and the like," remarks Strype, "were the spawn and improvements of this Family of Love." All this time H. N.'s writings were circulating in English, probably in Vitell's translation, as we know that certain of them were his work. They included the "Evangelium Regni," the "Glass of Righteousness," and also his Epistles, which were published in English, presumably by Vitell, in 1577, under the title of "The Choice Letters of H. N., which he by the Holy Spirit of Love hath set forth," etc.

The most flourishing period of the sect is not quite easy to determine from the evidence, but between 1570 and 1580 it undoubtedly created considerable stir in the country, more especially in the eastern counties, so much so that Elizabeth's lords of Council sent urgent letters to the Bishop of Norwich, pressing him to take forth-

with most stringent measures for its suppression. The Bishop, in his reply, promised to deal severely with the sectaries during his next visitation. On that occasion, he found that numbers of his clergy were infected with the new heresy (Strype, ii. 584).

More than two generations later, notwithstanding persuasion and persecution, the Familists seem to have been still to the fore. Strype refers to one Randal as "a Preacher to these Sectaries, in an House within the Spittle-Yard without Bishopsgate, London, in the year 1645, teaching the very doctrine, and many people flocking after him." In consequence of the success of the propagandism in the above-mentioned year, a polemical brochure was published entitled "A Brief Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familism," in which the usual charges were made against the sect.

During the Commonwealth and subsequently, the followers of Nicholas seem to have fallen very much into the background amongst the various sects, puritanical and otherwise, which at that time had a popularity, and they never again assumed their former importance. But that the sect continued to exist until almost, if

not quite, the end of the seventeenth century is evidenced by the fact that Strype, writing in the early part of the eighteenth century, says that he remembers "a gentleman, a great admirer of that sect, within less than twenty years ago, who told me that there then was but one of the Family of Love alive and he an old man." On the continent, the sect would seem to have disappeared sooner.

The connection between the Family of Love and Anabaptists generally and the various puritanical and dissenting sects of the Commonwealth and the time of Charles II. is rather obscure, though traces of such a connection are visible in several instances. For example, in certain respects we find indications of the Anabaptist tradition in such bodies as the "Ranters," and, what is more important, in the Quakers and in John Bunyan, as well, of course, as in the earlier phases of the modern orthodox Baptist denomination. Respecting the "Ranters," the fullest account I have been able to obtain is from a hostile pamphlet in the Bodleian Library entitled "'The Ranters' Ranting, or a True Relation of a Sort of People called Ranters, with some of their abominable and wicked Carriages and

Behaviour at their Public Meetings." The meetings, this pamphlet says, were held first of all in Shoemaker's alley, in London, beginning at four o'clock in the afternoon and sometimes continuing till nine o'clock the next morning, which time, says the writer, "was spent in drunkenness, uncleanness, blasphemous words, filthy songs, and mixed dancing of men and women stark naked." A party of them were apprehended at one of their meetings held in Whitechapel.

The greeting of the Brethren consisted in a kiss, followed by the words, "Welcome, fellow-creature!"—the latter being the designation generally used by the members of the sect to each other. At a meeting held by them at a tavern in London, one of them is alleged to have let drop a paper, which was subsequently found, containing the regulation summons to the female members to assemble. This, which may have been a forgery, was as follows:—"Dear Sister and Fellow Creature, whose sweetness we reverence and whose person we adore, whose witty conceits we admire and whose subtlety we wonder at, we do by this our handwriting enjoin that you personally appear at the place

where we last had some infernal conference half an hour past four in the afternoon of this present day. Hereof you are commanded not to fail, for that Beelzebub, Lucifer, Pluto, and above twenty more of the Princes and Officers will attend, etc. Signed Diabolo. Dated at our infernall Pallace without Bishopsgate, tenth of October, 1650." The writer of this curious pamphlet, which describes the meetings of the sect as simple orgies, states that one of the members "discoursing at the Spittle said that he knew no difference between God and the Divell; and being asked what he thought of the Divell, he answered that it was an old woman stuffed with parsley." Our author continues, "I am credibly informed that some of them deny the immortality of the soul, and so holding an opinion that there is neither heaven nor hell, etc." It is difficult to know whether we are to regard this strange sect as having any real organisation and following, or as denoting a mere sporadic eccentricity on the part of a few individuals without any continuance or independent importance. In any case, even if it were only a passing craze, the salutation and the nudity of the gatherings recall some of the

characteristics met with in certain phases of German Anabaptism, such, for instance, as we have seen manifested, according to Kessler, in the St. Gallen movement, as also in the case narrated in a previous chapter as having happened at the house of the cloth-merchant in Amsterdam.

The resemblance between many of the tenets of the Quakers and those of the Anabaptists is sufficiently clear. We see, for example, the doctrine of non-resistance, the contempt for the "steeple-houses"—the Münsterites had called churches "stone-heaps"—the condemnation of all outward forms and ceremonies, and the doctrine of the inspiration of the inner light as the supreme court of appeal. These are all thoroughly Anabaptist in origin. The simple character of their meetings, moreover, notwithstanding some possible points of difference, bears an unmistakable family likeness to those of the Anabaptist sects. Anabaptism, especially in its later form in the teaching of Henry Nicholas and its off-shoots, was undoubtedly in the air at the time when George Fox was born and grew up. That he had come across writings of an Anabaptist tendency, of the Familists and

others, is exceedingly probable. The communistic side of the earlier Anabaptism appears in a shadowy form in Quakerism in the shape of the special stress laid upon the duty of almsgiving to the poorer members of the denomination. It is also noteworthy that the parts of England where the followers of Nicholas and similar sects chiefly flourished, became the most fruitful seed-ground of Quaker principles. By their contemporaries the Friends were uniformly regarded as a sect of Anabaptists, as may easily be seen from the theological literature of the period.

The extension of their objection to sacraments to that of repudiating baptism itself does not entirely differentiate them from the Anabaptists, for we find that Bullinger mentions some amongst the Anabaptists of his own time who regarded the ceremony as superfluous, whilst certainly the bulk of them would have held it not essential to the soul's salvation. We many recall in this connection how Melchior Hoffmann and his disciples agreed from motives of expediency to the suspension of baptism for two whole years. This they would hardly have done had they deemed it an essential rite. Probably,

by most Anabaptists it was never viewed in any other light than as a useful sign to differentiate the Brethren within the spiritual fold from the heathen and godless without. The acceptance of infant baptism would have put the Quakers out of court with Anabaptists of every order, but the mere fact of going a step farther and rejecting adult baptism as well, would not. Even in their eccentricities and aberrations a correspondence may be traced between the English Quakers of the seventeenth century and the German Anabaptists of the sixteenth. Not alone is the ascetic puritanism of the one prominent in the other, but the scorn of all that savoured of the things of the world, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, is also reproduced in the plain, grey garb of the Quaker and his special modes of salutation, including his pedantic worship of the letter of truthfulness, as illustrated in his refusal to adopt the current forms of polite address. There is more in these things than what is common to the whole of the puritanical religious consciousness of that period. The doctrine that the inner light in the soul of the believer was the highest standard of authority in spiritual matters, taking

precedence even of the letter of Scripture itself —which the average puritan of the time regarded as final—is of itself a sufficient line of demarcation.

Even in the manifestations of religious mania that afflicted certain of their members at times, the earlier Anabaptism and the later Quakerism have most distinct points of correspondence. The very evidence of eccentric behaviour from which the sect acquired its name serves to prove this. No-one who has read the accounts of the peculiar orgies recorded of the sectaries in Germany and the Netherlands in the first half of the sixteenth century will fail to recognise the almost identical symptoms in those related of the Quakers during the second half of the seventeenth. Some remarkable stories of this kind of thing are told in a work entitled "The Fanatick History, or an exact Relation and Account of the Old Anabaptists and New Quakers," which was published anonymously by one Richard Blome in 1660. It deals with the latest English developments of religious sectarianism, besides including a history of the Anabaptists of Münster. The work, although hostile, contains many narratives of a detailed and

circumstantial character that can hardly be otherwise than accepted as true in their essential features. Thus we read how John Gilpin howled upon his bed and cried in a hideous manner, how he had visions and felt the divine spirit enter his body, how he was promised to be endowed with the spirit of prophecy, how at a meeting of the Friends he was thrown upon the ground in the midst of the company, where he lay all night, how he was turned from back to belly, making crosses continually with his legs—a distinct Anabaptist touch—how he was finally led down a street to enter "the fidler's house," where his hand was carried to a "bass-viol," upon which he played, afterwards being impelled to fall a-dancing, and so forth. Many more things of this nature indicative of acute religious mania are given of this Gilpin, and the narrative is alleged to be vouched for by Gilpin himself and by others of known fidelity in or near Kendal, in Westmoreland, where the events are said to have happened,

Again, of John Tolderry, it is related that he was exalted by earnest prayer at Quaker meetings and half starved himself, because he resolved to eat nothing that he liked, but lived only on

crumbs and remnants of other people's food. Two spirits appeared to him, and a voice told him that in twenty-five days he should be perfect. During these twenty-five days, he saw constant apparitions and heard sweet music, and was troubled with double voices, one commanding one thing, the other the exact opposite. A fly flew in his face one morning; he was persuaded that it was a messenger from God, and "from that time he was guided by flies in many things." He felt himself moved to pierce both ends of a needle through his thumbs and to spread his hands with the needle in them over his head, thus imitating Christ on the Cross. He then fell as if dead, and lay for three-quarters of an hour, in imitation of the three days, after which he was raised to his feet again and enjoined to tell his Quaker brethren what had happened and also to choose apostles from amongst them. A certificate is added to this narrative containing the names of a number of people who were fully satisfied of the truth of the things reported.

Of James Nayler, one of the most zealous votaries of Quakerism, various occurrences illustrative of religious insanity are described. One

of Nayler's female disciples, named Dorcas Erbury, who had been imprisoned for her faith in Essex gaol, averred that he had raised her from the dead. A copy of her depositions was sent by the magistrates to a member of the House of Commons. He reported it in Parliament, and a committee was appointed to examine into the question, Nayler himself being sent for. Previously to this, on October 24th, 1656, Nayler had entered Bristol on horseback, accompanied by one Timothy Wedlocke, a Quaker, with two women leading his horse and crying all the way "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Nayler was examined in the House of Commons in the Painted Chamber, and, in answer to questions, avowed that he was a prophet of the Most High God, and that such worship was due to him as representing the invisible spirit within him as was given to Christ at Jerusalem. The House ordered him to be straightway imprisoned for blasphemy. He had many imprisonments, was flogged from New Palace Yard to the Old Exchange, and was sent afterwards to Bristol to endure a like punishment. Whilst he was being flogged through the streets of Bristol, his disciples followed him, crying "Behold the Lamb of God!"

In September, 1559, the author of the "Fanatick History" says, divers witches were discovered at a meeting of Quakers and Anabaptists in or near Sherborne, in Dorsetshire. He gives their number as about two hundred. Details of this affair would be interesting, but are not forthcoming. Another curious feature of correspondence between the religious aberrations of Quakerism and Anabaptism is the antic of appearing naked in public, so frequently met with in cases of specially enthusiastic zealots of either sect. Several instances of this, occurring alike in churches and public assemblies and in the streets of London, are recorded of persons of both sexes alleged to belong to the Quaker denomination in its earlier developments. The circumstances connected with these incidents aptly illustrate the notions of "policing" prevailing in the seventeenth century, since these good people seem seldom to have been interfered with at the time, although sometimes they covered long distances of London-town in their nakedness, whilst if they were afterwards prosecuted it was generally for blasphemy or unsound doctrine rather than for indecent behaviour. It should be mentioned that James Nayler, who

died in 1660, wrote a reply to Blome just before his death, in which he acknowledged his former errors.

Leaving the Quakers, it is of importance to note the traces left by Anabaptism on the two chief monuments of the religious literature of the seventeenth century, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Holy War." No one reading the "Pilgrim's Progress" side by side with Tobias' story of the journey of Henry Nicholas and his friends, when they set out to an unknown destination, can fail to be struck with the idea that Bunyan had read Tobias' book or that, at any rate, they lived in a like mental atmosphere. We do not mean to say that there was any correspondence in the detail of the story but the general idea of the pilgrimage of the aspiring Christian to a bourne of which he knows not the whereabouts, his trials on the way, his temptations, his growth in grace, and so forth—all this is undoubtedly there. It is quite possible that memories of what Bunyan had read or heard of the great struggle of the early sixteenth century in Westphalia, and of the wanderings and trials of the Anabaptist Saints in their efforts to reach their Holy City

of Münster, may have also vaguely floated before his mind. We know that during the seventeenth century, and especially about the time of the Commonwealth, the story of the Münster Anabaptists was well-known and circulated in a variety of versions throughout the country, and that the opponents of Familists, Baptists, Quakers, Fifth-Monarchy men, and such-like sects, were never tired of "rubbing in" the moral of the wickedness, as they represented it, of Jan of Leyden and his followers.

It is significant to observe that Henry D'Anvers, in his "Treatise on Baptism," intimates his belief that the hatred with which the Münster Anabaptists were assailed,—on the part of those writing in the interests of authority, of course,—was largely due to the fact that they preached and practised communism, as they understood it. From this cause, he persuades himself, "much of the clamour of the Münster business did arise." As regards Bunyan, there is distinct evidence in his second great work, "The Holy War," that he not merely knew of, but had even carefully studied, the story of the siege of Münster. It would take too long here to show this in detail, and it is the more unne-

cessary inasmuch as it has been done with considerable elaboration by Mr. Richard Heath in the "Contemporary Review," (vol. 72, pp. 105-118). Bunyan himself was a Baptist of the eastern counties. His native place, Bedford, was not far from the leading strongholds of Anabaptism and allied movements. We cannot fail to recognise that in him and presumably his co-religionists of that time the old Anabaptist tradition was still alive. Unlike Dissenters of a later date, whom ignorance of history and economic influences had detached from all sympathy with the social innovators of the sixteenth century, it is clear that John Bunyan still retained his reverence for Jan of Leyden and his fellow-martyrs in the Anabaptist cause. The Münsterites were still for him the Saints of God, who were warring against the powers of this world and of Satan.

As regards the relation of the Anabaptist movement of this history to the modern Dissenting denomination of Baptists, there is not very much to be said. The middle classes became economically more prosperous, and settled down from the religious and political perturbations of the seventeenth century, after the Revolution that

placed William of Orange on the throne. The era of direct persecution for religious opinions had passed, and the new circumstances economic and political tended towards the moderation of "respectability" in all departments of life. Religious zeal sank into cold formality, and the enthusiasm for political and social renovation subsided into love of "order" as such, whatever that "order" might be. The Quakers themselves became gradually wealthy and ceased to be aggressively propagandist. They held their meetings in peace and quietness like other bodies, and suffered from little worse than a certain social ostracism, which also in time disappeared. They became noted for their probity in business, thrift, reliability, and other virtues especially dear to the heart of the rising middle-class.

It was so also, *mutatis mutandis*, with the Baptists. They too became frugal, sober and industrious small middle-class persons. Religious and political enthusiasm died down. Inconvenient tenets and views of life were either dropped altogether and repudiated or were allowed to fall into the background and become "pious opinions." As the matter stands with the later history of the sect, about the only point it possesses in

common with its protagonist and ancestor, the Anabaptism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is the theological position of rejecting infant baptism and practising adult baptism as a sign of admission to membership of its Church. There is nothing distinctive in any other respect to differentiate the modern Baptist from other sects of Protestant "orthodoxy". With the disappearance of the name Anabaptism, the thing itself went. The old fervour, the zeal, the self-confidence, the idealism, that stopped at nothing in their aim to revolutionise all life in accordance with the conception of Christianity as the religion of the disinherited, have long ceased to exist in the Christian sects of the modern world.

# CHAPTER XI.

## CONCLUSION.

In the course of the studies just terminated we have traced the main lines of social and political thought and life during that remarkable epoch, now nearly four centuries behind us, in which the period known as the Middle Ages was slowly but surely, (so to say,) winding up its accounts with universal history. During the first half of the 16th century, as more than once remarked in the course of these pages, the economic and political conditions of the Middle Ages, although rapidly disintegrating, were still in the main, outwardly intact. The undercurrent of change which was breaking through at different points manifested itself under mediæval forms. The same may be said of the intellectual aspect of the period in question. The old order of ideas was indeed changing, but the new ideas of the time that took the place of the old were still essentially dominated by a mediæval habit of thought. Thus the science

of the age was, taken as a whole, little more than the folk-lore, and ecclesiastical conceptions of the Middle Ages systematised under a new form. It is true that through this mass of old notions dressed-up anew, the facts and methods of modern science were here and there piercing. A Paracelsus amidst his abuse of the old medical theories based on the teaching of Galen and Avicenna, in favour of his own equally crude and fantastic system founded on the supposed affinities of things, nevertheless hit upon discoveries the value of which is recognised to-day. Still more a Copernicus who, working in the intellectual atmosphere of his age, must have been unquestionably in the main dominated by its modes of thought, could, notwithstanding this, lay the foundation of modern astronomy. But in judging of the age we must never forget that these things were exceptional, and that the newly awakened intellectual life of Christendom, in the bulk, moved along the old lines and sought to realise its dawning aspirations through methods dictated by these old ways of thought. Thus its freshly awakened interest in the investigation of Nature expressed itself in the search after the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of

Life, the Transmutation of Metals and such things. The chief interest in the study of the heavens for it lay in the calculation of nativities.

Yet there are some among the seemingly impossible ends which the 16th century placed before itself as the main objects of human science to achieve, and which it sought to realise by magical or quasi-magical means, that in the light of recent scientific research, no longer seem as absurd as they did in the early days of modern rationalism. Communication at a distance through other than the ordinary channels accessible to the senses, one of the achievements ascribed to the mystic powers of the learned alchemist and astrologer Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, is to-day a commonplace of the telephone and wireless telegraphy. Aerial locomotion, which the 16th century regarded as the exclusive privilege of the superior magicians, the Simon Maguses, of the world's history, is now a fact only awaiting some final touches to revolutionise transit. Even the Elixir of Life, impossible as it seems at first sight, has lost some of its absurdity in the light of theories based on recent experiments and now currently held by physiologists of repute. In short, while

of the objects handed down to it from tradition and furbished up anew by the freshly awakened intelligence of the Renaissance period, which the wisdom of that age placed before itself as the goal of its endeavours, such as the calculation of nativities and the Philosopher's Stone, some may have disclosed themselves to later ages as mere absurdity, there are many other things, at that time believed in as possible, but rejected as equally absurd in the earlier stages of modern science, which are nevertheless now the realised assets of later invention and discovery.

There is however a striking difference. Though some of the objects pursued by the votaries of the pseudo-science of the Renaissance have been realised by modern scientific discovery and invention, they have been realised in a different way and by very different means to those alone conceived of by the cosmic speculator of the 16th century. The latter had no idea—in accordance with the prevailing theory of the universe—of achieving his ends otherwise than by supernatural agencies or mysterious and occult powers akin to these, that he supposed to be inherent in nature. The methods by which the real results have been

attained have, of course, implied a complete revolution in our conception of the order of the universe.

The case of the social and political aspirations of the period in question is similar. As already pointed out, the communistic ideal of the religio-political movements of the Middle Ages which culminated in the Anabaptist revolt of the 16th century, was that of the communism of the economic product, and was invariably based on the notion of a return to the economic conditions of the old village community—an ideal which appealed to the poor handicraftsman and peasant especially when smitten by the stress of changing circumstances. The social revolution was conceived under a theological guise as the "Millennial Kingdom," the "Restitution of All Things," the "Reign of the Saints," and in cognate phrases. It was a dispensation of the Deity to be initiated in the relations of believers with each other, and the full fruition of which, the "Kingdom of God on Earth," would come when the time was ripe, and was to be awaited with prayer and watching. It was under the dominance of this attitude of mind that the conviction of the immi-

nence of the promised millennial reign seized such vast numbers of the poor working-population of Western Europe during those early years of the fourth decade of the 16th century. In such wise did the disinherited classes of that age envisage their social revindication. Not so does the proletariat of the modern Great Industry look for its emancipation. The aspirations, *au fond* legitimate as they were, of the mediæval working classes of the 16th century, were historically retrogade in their form both as regards the end conceived, and the means by which it was believed that end would come to pass—and hence they were foredoomed to failure. In the recognition of this the political economy of a later age regarded the bare notion of social and economic equality as a Utopian absurdity, much as the physicist of the dawning 19th century would have regarded immediate communication at a distance, or the reproduction of the voices of the dead, the steering of balloons, and such marvels of modern science. Nevertheless, we now see once again to the fore the notion of a social regeneration of society, not indeed based on the immediate communisation of the *economic product*, as

was the former, (and necessarily so owing to the then prevailing conditions of production) but based on the communisation of the *means of production*, concentrated as they are to-day on a great scale, and on their exploitation for the common use and benefit. Those who look forward to a higher and better organisation of society in our time no longer have visions of a "New Jerusalem," of a divine "Millennial Kingdom" brought about by the dispensation of a supernatural Providence. They base their hope and expectation, not on the vaticinations of prophets claiming a divine mission, but on the great facts of historic evolution and on the analysis of the material basis of human life to-day; in other words, on the conditions of modern capitalist production. Thus, in social as in physical matters, the crude fancies and vaguely thought-out aims of an earlier age are taken up again by modern scientific thought, and while the old beliefs and dreams as to how, when, and where, they should be brought about, have been long set aside for ever, modern science sees another way opened for their realisation, a way necessarily undreamt of four centuries ago. The goal as such, is indeed

seen to be attainable, but viewed in the light of modern research, and after an intervening industrial and economic evolution traversing so many generations it looks far different from what it did as regarded through the mists of mediæval and renaissance fancy. Thomas Münzer, Jan of Leyden, Jan Matthys, and the rest of those who sought the revindication of social justice in the early 16th century, have, together with their aspirations, passed away for ever. But foolish as their ideas seem to us to-day, who regard the problem from so totally different a standpoint, let us not forget that with all their follies and shortcomings, they were, in a sense, the forerunners of Modern Socialism, and, as such, let us spare them a passing tribute of recognition!

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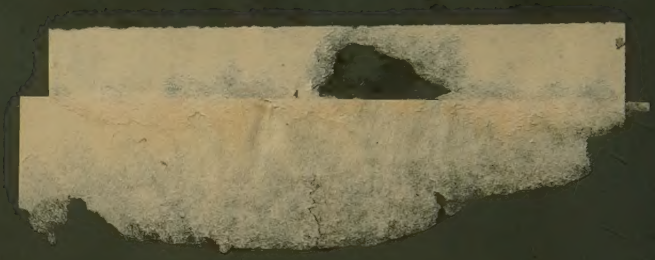

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